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HOW IT CAME TO PASS.



HOW IT CAME TO PASS;

OR,

SEED-TIME AND HARVEST.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. GEORGE SKELTON.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

WM. H. ALLEN & Co., 13, WATERLOO PLACE,

PALL MALL, S.W.

1871.

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250. y. 207.

London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., Printers, 13, Waterloo Place, Pall Mall, S.W.

HOW IT CAME TO PASS.



CHAPTER I.

LADY UPTON, of Upton Hall, Yorkshire, liked her own way.

Most ladies *do* like their own way. So this may, perhaps, not be considered descriptive.

It was, however, her chief characteristic.

She liked her own way. And the more it clashed with any other way, the more she clung to it. and the better she liked it.

She usually had it.

Need it be said that she was not a nice woman? But, she was an eminently practical, crushing woman.

Still, she had one weak point ; without it she would hardly have been human ; but, whereas most people have many weak points, she had only one,—her son.

Truly sensible she had shown herself in this, at least, that she had never left Upton Hall but once since her marriage. The first season after it she had spent in town in order to show herself and her belongings to the friends of other days, who had been used to pity and look down upon the snubbed, penniless niece of an aunt very like herself. Having flashed on them her dark beauty decked with jewels, and attended ever by gentle, assiduous Sir Harry, in drawing rooms and opera, in ride and drive, she retired to reign supreme in her own domain, and queen it more or less over all the district round.

She was sensible to do this. Not only because she could get there what she wanted,—her own way ; but because it was one of the loveliest places in Yorkshire, and one of the pleasantest to live in.

Dear old Upton Hall ! I think I see it now ! It was of no particular style of architecture, and belonged to no particular period, but had

been built in pieces by successive owners, who had by some means—was it the pervading spirit of the race?—made out of their separate ideas a large, grey, harmonious whole.

A delightful rambling house it was, with large rooms for state occasions, and all sorts of snug, cosy nooks for comfortable use and retirement; a house that was warm in winter and cool in summer, and somehow ventilated itself; and did not require you to be either blown away, to the peril of throat and lungs; or suffocated, to the peril of life. Well furnished, well kept. In the hall armour and stags' horns, even elephants' tusks and tiger skins, and the jaws of a shark, contributed by an adventurous Upton of former times; in the dining-room, old oak, and crimson draperies, and a carved mantel piece that was the envy and admiration of the entire neighbourhood; portraits, too, were there of ancestors for many generations, including the adventurous Upton, the great delight and model of the present Baronet, aged eleven; and also the late Sir Harry, a gentle, melancholy-looking man, with a weary, worn expression about the mouth, and pleading eyes.

The drawing room was altogether modern

and in *the best taste*; with nothing remarkable about it: having been re-furnished on the marriage of Lady Upton, who had not cared to interfere in the matter; being more given to exercise her power on persons than things, and requiring some capability of resistance to give a flavour to the exercise of her will.

But *the* room to sit in was the library. Here a lover of literature might revel in books; here a dreamer might languish through the long summer hours, shaded by lofty trees and refreshed by cool airs from the hills, bringing with them the scent of heather and gorse; and if not too lazy, might look over the smooth, trim lawn, starred with brilliant flowers, on to some acres of park-like land, with a tiny brook winding through it, and forming a little lake in the hollow, some quarter of a mile from the house; beyond which the ground began to rise gently with many undulations, and here and there a thick green wood, till, on the horizon, it became a chain of hills, whose bold outlines and picturesque forms presented a never ending variety, as they were shown or hidden by the ever changing atmosphere, sunshine and shadow.

Here, then, lived Lady Upton with her two children, one of whom she loved and one she hated.

She hated her eldest child because she had thwarted and crossed her in being born a girl when she wanted, and fully expected, an heir. Poor little baby! It got a wretched welcome into this bleak world. Its mother would none of it—would not touch it nor look at it. Had she borne all her pain for this? She loathed the little creature, and would not suffer it near her; so they took it away, and it might have pined and died, for it was but a weakly baby, only its very forlornness and rejection awoke the mother's heart in Lady Upton's maid, Pearson; and she nursed it and loved it as a mother might have done.

Her son, her boy, her heir, she loved with passionate devotion. He came to fulfil her will, to round the perfect measure of her state. She had got what she wanted; but none the more did she forgive her first disappointment, nay, she seemed to hate the one child almost in proportion as she loved the other. What was the girl to her? Already, even, she looked forward to the time when her dowry or fortune

must take so much from her darling, if she lived.

Her husband, who had done her will living, and had given her all she wanted, did it also in dying; not that she consciously wished that he should die, but, having no further need of him, she found him rather in the way. He felt this, and being, poor man! so used to do her will, died, perhaps, partly to oblige her. But he died partly, also, to oblige himself, for he was very tired of life. At all events, he *did* die. And dying, he left a will, giving her all he could give, and appointing her and his brother joint guardians of his children.

This suited her perfectly. As there must be another guardian, who could be better than Bertie Upton? who shrank at the very sight of her face entering a room, and for whom resistance to her would be impossible, supposing he should take the trouble to care what became of any living creature; which, as long as Bertie Upton was comfortable, was not probable.

So she had lived and reigned; and snubbed and shut up her daughter, and spoiled and exhibited her son to her heart's content. To be sure, he was passionate and wilful, and often

defied her; but he was her own, and like her, and handsome and daring, and—she loved him!

So they lived, till one spring morning. It was the spring of 1846, a date Isabel never forgot, for it brought something of change and joy into the life of her, the unloved child.

She was walking in the Wilderness, and Sir Harry came to her there.

The Wilderness was a considerable space of ground, which had been left almost to nature, stretching from the back of the house to some steep, rocky crags, bordering the moors. A few narrow walks wound in and out, under the hardy larches, among grey crags, some covered with moss, some almost hidden in the deep ferns; amid a luxuriance of heather, gorse, bilberry-wires, ferns, and wild flowers, that made a Paradise for lovers of such scenes. And from the rocks which bounded its upper side, the country might be seen spread out like a gigantic panorama.

This was Isabel's favourite haunt. She had taken refuge there, as a little child, from her mother's eye and voice, and her love for it had grown with her growth. Harry had followed her, and there they had played their games

and talked their talks, and stained their pinafores with the bilberries; there they had built houses of the fir-cones, and decorated them with ferns, and blue-bells, and primroses; there they had chased and chased the wonderful Echo which they never found, and which, whatever they cried out, sent back the sound clear and sweet, and with a raised tone at the end, which made of it a question. That dear, strange Echo! it was better, even, than all the fairy tales. There, they had plaited the rushes which Bob, a stable-boy, and Harry's especial friend and follower, brought from the moor edges; there they had lived the happiest part of their childish lives; there Isabel was free, and safe from the stream of perpetual fault-finding which ever pursued her indoors. To her this spot was Paradise; the wild, rough moorland filled her soul with vague ideas of grandeur and beauty, and gave to her, health, happiness and life.

As she wandered there on that morning of early spring, under the bright red tufts of the larches, drinking in their refreshing fragrance, mingled with the other wild scents she loved, she felt that the world was a very bright

and happy place, and that it was good to be alive; which she had often doubted, poor Isabel! though she was but twelve years old.

It is a favourable moment to see her. What is she like? Rather short than tall—angular; if it *must* be said, awkward; but with a face of great charm. This face is almost an oval, the nose perfect, and the rather large mouth full of sweetness; so are the deep brown eyes, her father's eyes, with all their pleading wistfulness and sadness. This fair, pale face, is older than her years, and only wants a little colour, a little gladness, to make it beautiful; framed, as it is, in dark brown hair, it might even now serve as a model for the picture of a saint. Gentle, timid Isabel! Strong, too, with the strength of love and patient endurance. Surely yours was "the sweetest soul that ever looked from human eyes!"

With such a face, with such a spirit shining through it, how came she to be awkward, even at that awkward age? It was not the fault of Nature, she had been lavish of her gifts; no, it was the awkwardness of timidity and fear, of habitual constraint and disapprobation; it came of having moved all her life under unloving

eyes,—a power most potent to check every budding grace.

Suddenly she paused in her walk and listened, and a glad light shone in her eyes, as they fell on a boy who came running towards her; bounding over stones and crashing down branches, and shouting with all the power of his lungs. Most eyes *did* brighten that rested on him then, handsome Harry Upton! His features being very like his sister's it was wonderful how he could be so unlike; but whereas she was subdued and patient and quiet, wilful life was in every line of his face, and mischief and eagerness and hope sparkled in his dancing eyes. As he bounded on, his brown hair waving in the wind, he made a picture to rejoice the heart of any who loved him—as his sister surely did. And he loved her, though in a slightly patronizing way, as being only a girl; still he *did* love her, and began to take her part and support her more and more; in all such matters as did not affect his personal convenience. That hers must give way when his was in question, she luckily doubted no more than he did; so that the harmony between them was never broken.

Her eyes rested lovingly on him, as he rushed up out of breath, crying,

"Izzy, Izzy, I want you! You're to go to Bellairs Park!"

A deep flush of surprised pleasure rose in her face, then faded.

"It can't be true, Harry!" she said.

"Isn't it though?" he answered. "Just you listen, and see if it isn't! This morning I wouldn't do a thing, and old Scrubs went to mamma, and she said she hoped I'd be a good boy, for she wanted me to go to Bellairs Park with her in the afternoon; and *I* said if she'd take you I'd work like anything, and *she* said she would; and I *did*. Come, now, what do you say to that?"

As this came tumbling out with the utmost rapidity, Isabel listened eagerly, and finally believed in the wonderful good fortune.

"O, Harry! Thank you!" she cried. "How delightful! How good of you to think of me!"

"O! I wanted you!" he answered. "Won't it be fine to show you the deer, and all the birds, and Flora's dogs; and Flora, too, she's such a jolly girl!"

So they walked together gaily under the

spring sunshine which flickered on their path, while Harry painted glowing pictures of coming delights, and Isabel listened with growing excitement, and asked him frequent questions, till this foretaste of happiness was ended by their being called in to dine at Lady Upton's luncheon, as was the rule when there were no visitors.

Lady Upton was struck immediately by the bright spot of colour which lay on Isabel's cheeks and the light in her eyes. She recollected her rash promise to Sir Harry, and determined at once to break it by some means, for take that awkward, disagreeable girl to Bellairs Park with her, she would not. She sat some time in silence, then said to Isabel's governess,

"Has Isabel done *all* her lessons properly, Miss Merton?"

A slight accent on the *all* showed what answer was expected; but for once it failed. Miss Merton couldn't do it. She knew the danger of rebellion, but she really couldn't. She looked at the girl's entreating eyes, and answered,

"Yes, my lady, she has."

How Isabel's eyes thanked her!

But Lady Upton said, with cold displeasure,
"I fear, Miss Merton, you are hardly strict enough with her."

Then there was silence again, for Sir Harry was too hungry to talk, and no one else would have thought of speaking when Lady Upton chose to be silent.

After a while she said sharply, so that the girl started,

"Isabel, what were you doing before luncheon?"

"I was in the Wilderness, mamma."

"As I supposed! spending your time in idle dreaming. And probably you have not practised more than an hour to-day?"

"No, mamma, but I have"—

"That will do. As you have idled away the morning, you must of course work in the afternoon; and I cannot take you to Bellairs Park, as I had thought of doing."

"I beg your pardon, my lady," said Miss Merton, excited to daring by the girl's quivering lips; "but I gave Isabel leave to go into the Wilderness"—

"Really, Miss Merton, you surprise me!"

interrupted Lady Upton; "that does not make the work done. And—look at her! Perhaps you *may* see that it is advisable that she should learn to exercise some control over her temper, and bear a little disappointment better than this."

A little disappointment! Poor Isabel! The tears were in her eyes and a lump rose in her throat; she felt choking.

Harry, too, was choking, but it was with amazement and rage; he literally *could* not speak at first. When he had been promised! When he had worked so hard!

"It's a shame, mamma," he cried, when he *could* speak; "a shame! I worked so hard,—didn't I now, Mr. Scrubton? And I told Isabel. You promised me, mamma, and she *shall* go; I say, she *shall*!"

As his indignation kept rising with his words, his face crimsoned, and he trembled with passion.

Lady Upton looked lovingly at him, and said:

"You are a dear, kind boy, Harry, to care so much for Isabel's pleasure, and I am sorry to disappoint you; but as she has not done her work, she must stay at home."

"She's done everything, mamma, I *know* she has," he retorted; "she *always* does; and it's not fair. I'll—I'll never believe you again."

"My dear boy, I meant her to go, of course, and perhaps some other day"—

"Another day won't do, mamma; you said to-day, and she shall go to-day—"

Even Lady Upton found this too audacious, but she didn't reprove *him*; she said:

"Isabel, go into the school-room; it is exceedingly wrong of you to encourage Harry to behave in this way; you are always causing some trouble."

"Oh, mamma!" ventured Isabel; "I—

"Be silent, and go at once."

And she went.

And Sir Harry's passion increased. He stood up and stamped, and cried:

"She didn't encourage me, mamma; she knew nothing about it! and you're not fair to her—never. I wish I was a man."

"Harry, for shame," said Lady Upton; "go at once, and ask Pearson to get you ready."

"I'm not going."

"Go at once, Harry."

"I *won't*, no I *won't*; not without Isabel."

Lady Upton looked at him, and saw she could not make him go, and thought of leaving him. It would have been well for him if she had done so, even though the quarrel had begun in injustice. But she could not. She loved to have him with her—the bright, handsome boy, whom everybody admired; and who managed, in spite of his wilfulness, to win all hearts; and she could not. So she gave way.

“Well, my boy,” she said, “I certainly *did* promise; and as you are so bent on it—why she may go this once. Now, come and give me a kiss.”

He went unwillingly, having a confused sense that it was all wrong together. His pleasure was spoiled, though he had got his way; and he went to tell Isabel with a dull heart. And with dull hearts, both of them, they got into the carriage.

But—they were young! The fresh air played on their faces, the bright sun shone, the merry birds sang and twittered in the just-budding trees, and their spirits answered to the gladness of nature, and were glad too. To Isabel, who never went anywhere, it was enchantment—fairy land.

As they drove through the spreading park, and the startled deer fled from them like the wind, and Harry cried again and again, "Look, Izzy, look! there's another! There, under that tree!" she grew more and more excited, until, at last, when they caught sight of the house, she forgot her mother's presence in gladness of heart, and exclaimed, "How beautiful!"

So it was beautiful!

A large, modern, stone house, with gardens and conservatories, and fountains laughing and sparkling in the sun, amid masses of lovely glowing rhododendrons—crimson, rose-colour, purple, white,—the whole showing against a background of wooded hills.

And the inside was as charming in its way. Isabel had never seen anything like the drawing-room they entered; pale rose colour, and white and gold, and delicate green; and flowers, such flowers! on all sides. It seemed a fitting place for the lovely girl who rose from her lounging attitude on a couch, and tossing aside a book of fairy tales, came forward with two little dogs who moved exactly with her, one on each side, to meet them.

Flora Bellairs, "O, she was fair, and very

fair!" Taller than Isabel, with blue eyes, and golden hair, and grace in every motion; she had lived and flourished in the sunshine of a great love; she was free and without fear of any earthly thing.

She was by no means fond of Lady Upton, but she liked Sir Harry, and when she saw Isabel, fell in love with her on the spot.

"How do you do, Lady Upton, so *very* glad to see you," said the young mistress of the house. "I think papa and auntie are in the library, I'll send for them." And she rang.

At this moment a lady entered the room, middle-aged, evidently unmarried; though the predominant expression of her face was tenderness; very like Flora, only *not* pretty. This was "Auntie," Miss Millicent Vane; Flora's guide, friend, worshipper, all but mother. Somehow, she was still Miss Millicent whenever she was not auntie. Though Flora's mother, her only sister, had died at her child's birth, she had never attained to the dignity of Miss Vane.

After the usual greetings, she said,

"How very kind of you to bring Miss Upton, but she looks rather pale;" then,

addressing Isabel, "Are you tired with the drive, my dear?"

"Oh, no!" said Isabel, blushing crimson, and caressing Pet, one of the dogs, which had crept on to her lap, and seemed quite at home there.

"Pray don't make her fanciful, Miss Millicent," said Lady Upton, "she wouldn't bear spoiling, as Miss Bellairs does."

"Who is this talking treason?" said Mr. Bellairs as he came in, "as if Flora *could* be spoiled, or Miss Upton either; will you let me try, my dear?"

But Isabel could do nothing but blush; this was a new language to her, and she had no words to answer.

Miss Millicent, who had been looking at her, said,

"Flora, do you think Miss Upton would like to go through the conservatories? There is that beautiful heath just out."

"O yes!" cried Sir Harry, burning with impatience, "Isabel's so fond of flowers, Flora; and I want to show her your birds, and the pony, and the fish, and everything."

Isabel looked at her mother; but Flora

seized her hand and away they went ; Pet and Fido—the other pet—leaping and skipping round them, and Mr. Bellairs saying,

“Mind you gather *all* the prettiest flowers, Miss Upton!”

If you were ever a child, come with me and them for a delicious hour, and leave the elders to prose and make talk, or leave it alone, as seems good to them. *I* don't care what they do, if only they leave us long enough,—and Miss Millicent is much of my mind. But it is not everyone who has been a child, and if you, respected reader, are of those who have *not*, I advise you to stay with the elders and think over what they said, for you will doubtless enjoy it much more than *our* absurd society. And if you don't—well, I don't care for that, either! I mean to snatch an hour, just one, from the far, sunny past, and be a child again; even though I must admit it to be doubtful if I was ever very much of a child myself. But I have seen the error of my ways, in that respect at least, and, if I might only try again, would promise to be the most childish of children; and frolic in the sun, and chase the butterflies, and weave myself garlands

of fresh, bright flowers:—while yet there was time.

To be a child! Think only what it is! Think of the joy of hope—unchecked by fear. Think of the venturous, eager steps pressing ever forward to the grown-up land, the happy land; where they are to do as they like, and realize wonderful visions of fairy palaces, in which they will live happy ever after, with *all* their best beloved. In all their bright future is neither sorrow, nor sickness, nor death, nor care. Who would not be a child? A child that should never grow old. Maybe some of us have such treasures in the store-house of God. Meantime let us snatch an hour with the earthly children; one of the winged hours that is bearing them so fast, alas! so very fast, to that beckoning happy land, where the glittering rainbows turn to rain, and the sparkling jewels to dust and ashes; where the sunshine dies off the road winding on the flowery banks of running streams; and they awake to stumble in darkness and pain over ruts, and stones, and thorny brambles, on a road where lie in wait for them disease, and age, and death.

But it is the children's hour, and to them this is not, for they know it not. Their glowing hopes are never damped, no touch of doubt comes over them, at sight of the sad, and worn, and weary faces borne by the dwellers in this happy land—more weary, more worn, more sad, the longer they have lived there. How is it they do not see? I know not, but it is most certain that all this takes no faintest gleam of sunshine from the blissful picture they make of that strange future;—so near and yet so far.

But *this* happy hour is *too* happy, too full of present joy, to leave room even for dreams! We rush into the conservatory, and Sir Harry and Flora laugh and talk, and Isabel expands into new life in the spiritual and actual sunshine, and feasts her eyes on the flowers she loves, and goes into raptures with a maidenhair fern;—whereupon Flora says she will send it to the carriage for her; causing her great fears for the consequences as regards both Mr. Bellairs and her mother. At the expression of which fears Flora is intensely amused, and, *à propos* to nothing, begs to be allowed to call her Isabel; and asks what flowers she likes, and gets for her just what she, Flora, likes; and flits about

cutting, and arranging, and chattering, till Sir Harry lapses into a state of repressed fidget and wonders if she means to stay there all day. Not being used to bear he doesn't do it long, but bursts out with,

"I say, Flora, I'm sure you've got heaps of those things; *do* come and let's have a look at that jolly old parrot."

"Go now, if you like, Sir Harry," said Flora, "but I *must* just fill up this side."

"But I don't want to go by myself," returned Sir Harry, "I do *so* want Izzy to see them all, *do* come now, Flora, there's a good fellow? The bouquet doesn't want another flower, it's a regular stunner."

"Patience, Sir Harry, patience," replied Flora. "Patience is good for the gout"—as I heard Brown tell poor old Thomas the other day."

"But I haven't got the gout," began Harry, with decided *impatience*.

The rest of his speech was stopped by Flora's suddenly starting off, with,

"Now for a race! Who'll be at the Aviary first?"

Sir Harry was, of course, and stood in pant-

ing triumph to receive them, and witness Isabel's delight at the first sight of the birds of all sizes and of gorgeous hues, crimson, green, orange, blue; that were flitting happily in their sunny home from twig to twig, and darted to the front to greet their mistress.

"They beat the flowers, don't they now, Izzy?" he said.

"O they're lovely! and see, they know Flora!"

"O yes! they know *her*, fast enough; and there's a parrot can talk like anything, look at him! No, not that green fellow with the red ruff," he continued, following Isabel's eyes, "it's the little grey one in the corner, don't you see him now?"

"O yes! I see him," said Isabel, "but he's not so pretty as the other; can he *really* talk, though?"

"Can't he just! Do speak to him, Flora?"

"Good morning, Polly," said she.

"Good morning, Flora," he answered.

Isabel, who had never heard a real parrot before, though she had heard of the wondrous doings, or rather sayings, of this one, was delighted.

"O! what a love of a bird," she cried, "*do* get him to say something else."

Whereupon Polly came in, not quite *à propos*; —he *did* make mistakes sometimes, as the wisest of birds will!

"My dear love, *do* let Wilson bring you a shawl; you'll take cold now the dew is falling."

"He's learned that from auntie," said Flora, laughing. "Dear auntie, she doesn't like it, but I tell her it's very useful, for I *always* hear it now, whenever I come out."

"Pretty pet, pretty pet, don't be jealous," he continued, "who loves pet?"

Then, with his head on one side, and looking comically out of one eye,

"Visitors! Oh dear! What a bore!"

How they laughed at this! and Flora said,

"You wicked bird. I do believe you know what things mean!"

"You wicked bird, I do—" answered Polly, and stopped, because he could'nt remember any more. But Sir Harry didn't think so, not he! He was dancing with delight.

"That's you, Flora, *you*; a wicked bird! Ain't he clever, just! What a lucky girl you

are to have such heaps of nice things. Isabel has nothing."

"O Harry!" from Isabel.

"Come and see me very often, will you, dear?" said Flora.

"O, if I might!" exclaimed Isabel, "but I'm afraid—I don't think—that is, mamma—"

"Oh! I'll arrange it with Lady Upton!" said Flora, decidedly. "I'll tell her I *must* have you, I can't *live* without, now I have once seen you."

And the impetuous girl put her arms round Isabel and kissed her; while Sir Harry, the birds and the dogs, looked gravely on; and Polly repeated,

"Pretty pet! pretty pet! Don't be jealous. Who loves pet?"

"There's the pony and the fish, yet, Flora," said Sir Harry, on the conclusion of this episode.

"O yes! we mustn't forget them."

And they ran off again, and enjoyed the run, and enjoyed the fresh air, and enjoyed the sight of the fish, who were almost as splendid as the birds; and had not finished admiring

them when Lady Upton, Mr. Bellairs, and auntie came to them; and they had to go without seeing the pony after all.

Their hour was over, though Miss Millicent had done her very best—even taken Lady Upton to look at the heath—knowing perfectly well that she cared no more for flowers than an elephant. Their hour was over; has it been too long? They did not think so.

“Oh! we’ve been so happy, Lady Upton,” cried Flora. “Will you please let Isabel come very, *very* often? May she come and stay with me?”

Lady Upton looked at her in cold surprise, and said:

“You are exceedingly kind, Miss Bellairs, but Isabel must attend to her studies; and—excuse me—I should hardly think of accepting the invitation of so very young a lady.”

Flora looked surprised, but noways discomposed; and Mr. Bellairs said:

“Oh, Flora knows we are always glad to have any one she likes; but in this instance I shall be personally obliged if you will allow Miss Upton to come. It requires little pene-

tration to see how great an acquisition she must be. Will you be kind to us, and help to improve Flora, who *is*, I fear, just a little spoiled?"

Lady Upton was thoroughly vexed, and bitterly repented having brought her. But what could she do?

"You are too good, Mr. Bellairs," she answered, taking refuge in a last resource,—*"in the summer, perhaps: but just now my horses are so much worked, that I really couldn't send her."*

"Oh, papa!" said Flora, "how long till summer!"

"Pray, allow us to fetch Miss Upton," said Mr. Bellairs. "If we may come on Thursday morning at ten, it will give us great pleasure to bring Miss Upton and Sir Harry, and to send them home at night."

Lady Upton could not refuse, so she accepted; and it was a settled thing. They were to spend a day, a whole long day, amid those wonderful delights. Isabel feasted in the thought all the way home, feasted in peace; for Lady Upton did not utter a syllable.

As soon as they arrived, Sir Harry and

Isabel rushed up into the room, where Pearson was sitting at work, still called the nursery, and cried out together :

“ Oh, nurse, we are to spend all the day on Thursday at Bellairs Park ! ”

“ Mr. and Miss Bellairs are coming for us at ten o'clock,” said Harry.

“ And it's the most beautiful place, nurse,” said Isabel, “ and Miss Bellairs is the prettiest and the nicest girl you ever saw ! ”

“ And the parrot ! I wish you could hear it,” said Sir Harry ; “ I'm *sure* it knows *every* thing ! ”

“ And such flowers ! ” said Isabel. “ See, Flora gave me all these ! ”

“ Then you've enjoyed yourselves after all, my dears ? ” said Pearson, looking fondly at their glowing faces.

“ Oh, nurse, it was like Fairyland ! ” cried Isabel. And Sir Harry said, “ When I am a man, Isabel shall have as many things as Flora. ”

Then Pearson looked grave, and said, “ You haven't a dress fit to spend the day at Bellairs Park in, Miss Isabel. I must speak to my Lady. ”

"Oh, please nurse, don't," said Isabel; "if you do, mamma won't let me go; and I'm sure Flora wouldn't mind, nor Miss Millicent: they are *so* kind!"

"Bless you, love! anybody would be kind to *you*, almost," replied Pearson,—the memory of her mistress suggesting the 'almost.' "But never fear; *I* won't keep you from going; but I *will* get you a proper dress, such as Miss Upton ought to wear."

"Do, nurse," said Sir Harry; "it's a shame to see her like that; and Flora has, oh! *such* pretty things! I never knew it till to-day, when I saw them together."

When Pearson went to attend Lady Upton at night, she saw at once that she was in an awful temper, but having made up her mind she was not to be stopped by that; so, while she was brushing her hair, she said:

"I hear, my lady, that Sir Harry and Miss Upton are to spend the day at Bellairs Park on Thursday."

"Yes."

"Miss Upton has not a dress fit to go in, my lady." Her ladyship's face brightened.

"Ah, well!" she said. She can't go with-

out a proper dress, so I must make an excuse for her; and Sir Harry can go alone."

Pearson looked excessively grim, but she was not so easily beaten. Having brushed on viciously for a while, causing her ladyship to cry out more than once, she returned to the attack.

"If your ladyship will allow Thomas to drive me over to Bransford to-morrow morning," she said, "I can get the material and make a dress ready for Miss Upton."

"Nonsense, Pearson! Thomas might have nothing to do but drive you about the country! For such a trifle, too! I want him!"

"Very well, my Lady," answered Pearson, "I can walk;" and she looked grimmer than ever.

"How ridiculous!" said Lady Upton. "Four miles! and my laces want washing; they *must* be done to-morrow, and I won't have Marsden touch them, mind. So, you see, it's impossible."

"No, my Lady, I beg your pardon, but I can make the dress in the night, and I *will*. Miss Upton ought to be fit to go anywhere.

And if you please, my Lady, I think I may as well get the material for two or three dresses, as now they have once seen Miss Isabel, they are sure to be wanting her always."

"What a tiresome, obstinate woman you are, Pearson."

"Yes, my Lady."

"And perfectly ridiculous about Miss Upton."

"Yes, my Lady."

Now Pearson was not a wilful woman as a rule, or she never could have lived with Lady Upton; but when she had once made up her mind she was immovable, or as her fellow-servants expressed it, "as stupid as a pot-mule!" Though one would think the animal was obstinate enough in the flesh to serve as comparison for any human creature. She and her mistress rarely came into collision, still it seemed surprising that she should have stayed with her so long, but in point of fact the idea of parting never occurred to either of them. She had been with her from a girl, and seemed to belong to her; she was wonderfully skilful, too, in getting up lace, and in toilet mysteries generally, and would not have been easily re-

placed. So, seeing her resolved, her Ladyship gave up the point as, to her only, on occasion, she was used to do.

"Well, I suppose you must have your own way," she said, after a pause. "Thomas can drive you, and the laces may wait till Thursday. I shan't want them till next week."

"Thank you, my Lady."

So Pearson triumphed, and went to Bransford the next morning accordingly, and bought three of the prettiest dresses she could find. One was made, ready for Isabel on the Thursday morning, and when, dressed in it, she entered the room where Mr. and Miss Bellairs were waiting. Lady Upton saw, with surprise, that she didn't look so *very* gauche after all!

CHAPTER II.

FIVE years had passed, and the children's feet were close upon the borders of the happy grown-up land. Did the glow of its coming glory shine over them and brighten all things with the fair sunrise light? Isabel was again walking in the Wilderness; did its beams reach her?

The winged years that fled so fast had still found time to soften any lingering line of harshness in the rounded form, and the shrinking timidity was no longer awkward; nay, it was another grace. But it was, alas! a fearful soul that looked from the dark eyes of the sad, pale face, sweeter even than before. Surely no glow of coming brightness rested there!

Sir Harry was with her. These same years had given him height and strength and beauty;

he was very handsome, and bore his sixteen years almost like a man; but they had taken from his face the frank, boyish expression which had been its greatest charm, and left there the marks of fretting, and wilfulness, and violent temper. There was no glow of coming brightness there.

He was speaking to his sister, speaking loudly and angrily.

"I tell you, Isabel, I won't stand it. It's perfectly ridiculous and idiotic! I'm not to go here and I'm not to go there, and I can't get what I want like any other fellow, but must go to my mother for a horse or a pair of boots!"

"Dear Harry," said Isabel, laying her hand on his arm, "*do* be patient. I know it is hard for you, but you'll have everything you want when you are twenty-one."

"Twenty-one!" he exclaimed, shaking off the hand, "why that's ages off! And what's the good of being patient? What has it done for you, I should like to know? I *can* get what I want if I choose to ask for it, but *you* can't get it any way. I shall just go and ask my mother to let me have £500 a year to do

as I like with, and if she wont! well, I'll go to the diggings,—or the deuce! I don't care!"

"Harry, Harry, don't talk like that, pray don't!" cried Isabel. "Write to uncle Bertie again; perhaps, now you're older, he'll do something for you. You know he has always said you were too young to have the command of money, and it was much better for you to have to get what you wanted from mamma; it would keep you out of mischief. Do try him again, Harry, you are more than a year older than you were last time you wrote; and he is our father's brother—he *must* care something for you."

Sir Harry laughed. A laugh that sounded strangely bitter for one so young.

"You think so?" he said. "Well, I suppose any one *would* think so. Read that!" And he took a letter out of his pocket and gave it to her.

She saw that the address was in her uncle's writing, and said in astonishment,—

"What? you *have* written?"

"Read it, read it," he said, impatiently, "and don't stand bothering; you'll see fast enough what I've done."

She hastily opened and read the following epistle:—

“ 17, Mount Street, Park Lane,

“ June 1st, 1851.

“ MY DEAR HARRY,

“ As far as I understand your charmingly-incoherent epistle, you feel yourself aggrieved in being only a boy; you want to be a man. Well, *I* can't help your being a boy, you *are* a boy; and, were it not for fear of wounding your acute sensibilities, I would say a big fool into the bargain. What's the matter with you? What do you want? You'll get old fast enough, never fear. Why, you young muff, it is worth the world to be sixteen! Wouldn't I change the envied liberty you rave about against it, if I had the chance, even if I *were* to be kept rather short of pocket-money! By Jove! I should not need asking twice!

“ As for interfering with Lady Upton, and what she thinks right, I shall do no such thing; and, as long as you get what you want, I don't see what earthly difference it can make to you whether the money comes out of your mother's pocket or your own. I told you

when I saw you that my health would not stand worry, and it is not any better, but worse.

“Then there is the bosh about being your father’s brother, and all that. Of course I am his brother; don’t I know it to my cost. The heaps of papers and things I have been bored with! But it is no reason why *you* should keep boring me, and upsetting my nervous system with letters. I have taken care to have no children of my own, and it is *too* hard that I am to be worried out of my life with other people’s. I must say for Isabel that she has let me alone, and there is no reason why *you* should throw her at my head. She is a great deal better shut up than racing all over the country; the girls are getting uncommonly fast now, and I shouldn’t wonder, if she’s kept quiet, that she will make a hit. Who knows? Perhaps she may make some fool so in love with her as to save you her dowry!

“Now, I have written you this long letter once for all. Don’t write again, it is of no use. Nothing you can say will make me act against your mother’s wishes. I would not do it—no, not to be in your shoes—and that is saying something. Young, handsome, and a baronet,

with a large unencumbered estate of which you will be master at twenty-one! A fitting object of compassion, truly! Poor fellow, *how* pathetic!—Why, you are a complete fool!

“I may come down for a week or two’s shooting in September, if you will leave me in peace; but as for putting up a young man with spirits and a temper in my small house—good Lord!—the very idea takes away my breath!

“Give my love to Isabel; now, I should not mind *her* coming to see me if she likes.

“By the bye, if you send me any more such letters, I think the best thing I can do will be to send them to your mother, then she will perhaps be able to make out what is the matter with you; and *may* do what you want.

“Tell Dobson to see that the dogs are in good training.

“Your affectionate uncle (for his sins),

“HERBERT UPTON.”

As she read, a little spot of colour came into the pale cheeks, and she folded it up and gave it back to him with a hand that trembled, but she did not speak.

“Well,” he said, “what do you say now?”

Shall I write again to my guardian?—Appeal to my father's brother for a little sympathy—a little place in his heart? Tell me, what shall I say to touch my loving uncle?"

"O Harry, it is cruel, cruel," cried Isabel. "How can he write to you like that!" And as she spoke the tears gathered in her eyes, then rolled slowly down.

This sight seemed to exasperate him still more.

"What! crying again! you might be made of tears! *I don't cry.*" And as they came faster, he continued,

"Well, if that's to be it, I'm off; you get worse and worse. One can hardly speak to you now without getting a shower." And he made a spring into the bushes at the side of the path to leave her. She sprang after him, and stopped him.

"I won't cry, Harry, if you'll stay, indeed I won't! but it grieved me so. I don't mind for myself, but it is so hard for you!"

He let himself be brought back, though moodily, and again they walked along side by side.

"Hard!" he said, "I should think it *was*

hard ! But crying don't mend it, and it makes me feel wild. And you '*don't mind*,' as you say, and you creep about like a mouse, till I feel sometimes as if I could knock you over, I do. And *he* doesn't mind, that loving uncle of our's. I might forgive him calling me a fool and a muff, though it is hardly polite, still I *could* forgive him that—but to take it so coolly about you when I told him the life you led ! The selfish old sinner ! *He* wouldn't mind, no, not if we were tied together and drowned like two puppies ! Not that he'd do it, oh no ! he wouldn't take the trouble ! Damn him ! How I hate him, with his smooth face and ways !”

“Harry, Harry, *pray* don't swear ! for our father's sake that's in heaven, don't !”

“I beg your pardon, Izzy, I didn't mean it ; I won't do it again ! Our father in heaven ? Well, I suppose he *is* in heaven, but how he can be comfortable there while his children are treated like this on earth, is more than I can understand.”

“You *must* not talk like that, Harry, it's wicked ! And you really *have* all that uncle Bertie says, you know ; if you *can* but have

patience till you're twenty-one—it's not so very long."

"But I *can't*. Patience, patience, that eternal patience! I'm sick of patience! No, there's nothing left for me but to clear out. I can't write to my uncle again, and I wouldn't if I could. Did you notice what he said about sending any future letters to my mother? I didn't think he was a sneak before!"

"Oh! he wouldn't do it, Harry,—he only said it to stop your writing to him."

"I don't know, and I don't care. I believe he would do anything to save himself a minute's trouble. He *might* have got something for you—at least he could have sent you a horse."

Isabel smiled—if only the want of a horse were her greatest trouble! she thought.

"But I can live very well without," she answered. "Think how many people *do* live without horses! But I couldn't live without *you*, Harry, and you talk of leaving me. What *should* I do then? Oh, what *should* I do? Don't do it, Harry, don't. It breaks my heart to think of. Promise me you won't?"

"Well, well, I won't—not yet, at least. I'll try again. There now, don't cry for goodness' sake! If you would only be a little brighter, and pluck up a spirit, and speak for yourself, I think I could take things more quietly. Why don't you? you are not a baby."

"I daren't, I can't," she answered, "it's of no use trying; the words stick in my throat. And it would be of no use if I could, mamma does not love me as she does you, she wouldn't care what I said or did."

He walked along in moody silence for some minutes, then said, as if unwillingly,

"Well, I suppose you are about right there, though *why* she doesn't, beats me. But if you can't speak for yourself, somebody must speak for you: and as to this garden party at Warfield Chase that she said so coolly you were too young to go to, go you shall—I've made up my mind to *that*—or I'll be shot if *I* will."

"O yes you will, Harry," she replied coaxingly, "for my sake; and don't say anything about it. What does it matter whether I go or not? I'm sure I don't care—at least not much, and I *am* very young, you know; be-

sides, Flora will, perhaps, be able to persuade her."

"I wish she may!" he answered. "She is coming to-day. I'll let her try, and if she can't—why then *I'll* try, for I have made up my mind about it—as I tell you."

"Don't Harry, don't, *pray* don't!" she cried, and again laid her hand on his arm, "I would rather never go anywhere, never! I would rather *die* than see you in those awful passions."

This time he did not shake off the hand, he even stopped and looked down at her lovingly: with all his faults he *did* love her.

"Don't be such a fool, Isabel," he said. "I do think girls are next door to idiots! I might be going to commit murder! However, if it will be any comfort to you, I can promise you I won't go into a passion this time—I'm past that, just now. You silly girl, don't tremble so!" And he stopped and kissed her; but when he raised his head, he walked on again in silence, with a moody, dogged resolution fixed in his young face.

It was the month of June—leafy, merry

June;—but the bright sun could hardly penetrate the thick, close trees, under which wound the path they had chosen; only a quivering beam caught now and then a branch, and played there, then darted across their feet, and lost itself in green heather and ferns, or leaped to another tree, and played with a fresh branch; but never rested long.

Isabel's eyes followed the wandering rays, while her feet moved on mechanically, and as she looked she thought of Flora, and the fancy came to her that this dark, shut-in walk, was like her life, and the sunbeams that broke in upon it were Flora, all Flora. Her mind went back to that spring morning, more than five years ago, when Harry had come running to tell her she was to go to Bellairs Park for the first time. She saw herself and him—saw the very trees as they were then, and smelled the odour of the fresh tufted larches as it had been wafted to her on that very morning. She went through all the day, the glorious, wonderful day, with only that one cloud, when she thought she might not go. Saw again the birds, the fish, the flowers, and dear Miss Millicent, who had grown to be so much to

her since; and kind, stately, Mr. Bellairs, who had been her friend, too, till that sad day; should she ever forget it? when she and Flora, seated in the library, had seen a group come slowly up the drive, more slowly as they neared the house, moving with unwilling feet, and bearing something in their midst—something that had been Mr. Bellairs before he was thrown from his horse that day—something from which she turned with shuddering dread, while Flora covered it with passionate kisses, and called again, and yet again, in wild piteous accents, to the father who never yet had turned a deaf ear to her voice. Alas! how many have so called with anguish that might wake the dead, if the dead *could* wake, and been so answered. No word, no touch, no glance, for evermore. She had stayed with her then—who could take her away? And then had been finally broken down all barriers between the two houses, barriers that until then Flora had been ever surmounting or breaking, only to find new ones. Truly, she *had* been her sunshine, she thought,—a sunshine that would penetrate, that would not be shut out, that was so used to welcome it could not understand rejection,

and no sooner found one crevice closed than it streamed boldly through another. How often had it cheered her when weary and heartsick with trying, always trying, to please, and failing always; how often comforted her after some scene of stormy passion between her mother and Harry, in which she had felt for both, and vainly put her weak self between them, till she was worn out; how often come like a deliverer and chased away the clouds and banished the coming storm. What would her life have been without Flora? Could she have lived? Hardly, she thought. Harry loved her, but with him were always turmoil and fear. Pearson loved her, too, and would have given her all the sunshine in the world, if she could; but then, she had little to give. No, it was Flora—bright, happy, loving Flora—whose grief was now three years old, and had long been hardly grief, (three years is so long a time when one is young!) she it was who had made the sunshine of her young life. And still her eyes followed the wayward, darting beams, and she thought how like they were, until she smiled. Harry caught the smile.

“Well, what amuses you?” he said. “I

don't see anything so jolly in this precious life we lead as to make me ready to grin all by myself. What is it?"

"I was thinking of Flora, Harry," she answered. "How like her those sunbeams are, and how she had been to me what they are on this path."

"O, bosh! If *that's* all, you are easily pleased," was the gracious reply. "She's a jolly enough girl to be sure; but as for sunshine and stuff!—and if *she's* the sunshine, what am *I*, I should like to know? Clouds and darkness? Hey?"

Her heart was warmed with the thought of Flora, and she laughed as she answered,—

"Well, really; do you know you look very like it just now. I'm sure you wouldn't if you could only see your face, as nurse used to tell you, when we were children. Come, now, Harry," she added, warmly, "don't be cross, you know you are more to me than all the world; but I *do* love Flora, and so do you, when you are not in a bad temper. Don't you now? Say yes."

She stood and looked up at him, smiling, and he smiled in return.

"Yes," he said. "There, ain't I good? I do. But she's not worth half you, Izzy, if you'd only look always as you do just now, instead of crying and moping like an owl. Come along and let us see if she is here; she said she'd come early, and I want to have it settled." And, as he turned to go in, the brightness passed and he was stern and hard again.

Flora had arrived, and was in the drawing-room with Lady Upton.

Ah! here we come at last to signs of the Happy Land. Her feet are just within its borders, and a radiance of hope and joy is round her golden head, as she bends it eagerly towards Lady Upton, speaking words of low entreaty. "O, she was fair, and very fair; her beauty made *men* glad!" Each of those past years that left to so many a legacy of pain and woe had dropped for her an added grace, a new charm; the one that brought her great sorrow gave the crowning grace; a tender sympathy that shaded like a summer cloud the dazzling gaiety and wit, and lent a wondrous harmony to the whole.

A very girl withal she was, and rejoiced in

her fair self, as in every other pretty thing she saw, and loved to adorn it and enhance its charms—as if she could!—with all her taste in colour and effect. She loved the full, bright colours of the tropics in birds and flowers, and always managed to have about her dress some touch of scarlet, or glowing crimson, or intense blue; nay, I have seen her in a complete dress of orange colour with blue trimmings, and, looking at her, you would have said that orange colour was the only wear. Not that I would advise all young ladies to follow her style. She happened to be of those who can do anything; but there are not many such, and, alas! for the common-place people, when they put on their words, their ways, their dresses. I believe many an absurd fashion originates in this fatal mistake. A little strutting pigeon, walking out one fine day, sees a peacock airing his splendid tail, and forthwith orders one as like it as may be,—with all the colours, and more. He puts it on gloriously, and is charmed with the effect; not so the peacock—nor the other birds.

But Flora was bending forward, speaking to Lady Upton. Ah! here is a long dweller in the Happy Land; surely its influence will be

all about her, we shall see from her face where and how she dwells? Is it true what Michelet says? Is each one the sculptor of his own face, moulding and forming it all through life, so that he may make of beauty, ugliness; or ugliness, beauty? If it be, this face tells a sad story of mis-spent life and labour. How is its beauty marred! The outline is still there, but no one now would ever think of it as beautiful. Hard and restless, wrinkled and worn, with the brow set in an almost constant frown, there was no repose, no peace, in all that angry, fretting face; and it was very, very seldom that aught but hate and scorn looked from the keen black eyes.

The first words Harry and Isabel heard as they entered were from her.

"I have told Isabel already that she can't go, Flora, I don't think it fit for her; say no more about it."

Flora rushed up to them, and said, "I'm sure you want to go, now don't you, Isabel? And I want you so dreadfully. O, really, it *must* be done!" Then she returned to Lady Upton, and seating herself near her, continued, "You *can't* be so hard-hearted, dear Lady

Upton, why there may not be such a thing again for years!"

"Indeed, but I *can*," said her ladyship, grimly.

"O Sir Harry!" cried Flora, "*do* come and help me!"

But Sir Harry didn't stir, nor look up, he only said,

"I should very much like Isabel to go, as my mother knows."

"Now you hear, Lady Upton," resumed Flora, "you *must* say yes, now, to please Sir Harry, if you won't to please me?"

"No," said her ladyship.

"Oh! you forget that Isabel is as old as I am, nearly, you must have forgotten, because I'm sure you think *me* wise enough. Why, she's seventeen! It's an immense age, old enough for anything, old enough to be married! You'd forgotten how old she was, now hadn't you, dear Lady Upton; of course you'll say yes, now?"

"How you do run on, Flora," replied Lady Upton, "As you mention the subject, I must say I think you would be much better at home, though, no doubt, you *are* more fitted for such

a scene than Isabel is. However, you do what you like, unfortunately for yourself, but Isabel will do what *I* like, which is—stay at home.”

“No doubt you are right,” replied Flora, with a mischievous sparkle in her eye, “of course you must know much better than I do; but one ought not always to consider one’s own interests only, ought one? Think of the loss to society if I were shut up! and Isabel is a greater loss than I am.”

“You have no idea, Flora,” said her ladyship, smiling coldly, “how well society bears the loss of its most brilliant ornaments, when they drop out of it; you will doubtless discover that fact, with many others equally astonishing, in the course of time.”

“But we are not thinking of dropping out of it just now,” retorted Flora, “we want to drop *in*, you know. And Isabel is so pretty! now wouldn’t it be delicious to introduce *two* belles? You would be the envy of half the county! And think of poor Mr. Warfield! Why, it would hurt his feelings, and spoil his party, and endanger his election—and—and—*jeopardize*—yes, that’s the word—*jeopardize* the Great Conservative Interest!—and imperi

the Destinies of Europe!—and, consequently, of the Civilized World!”

Lady Upton laughed, Isabel laughed, even Harry smiled, and said, “You might as well throw us in the Uncivilized, too, Flora!” And Lady Upton said,

“If your sympathies are so strong, Flora, offer your services to write addresses for Mr. Warfield, they will evidently be far more valuable than the presence of two mere girls at a party. You have made wonderful progress in the time! How did you manage to compose that astounding peroration? It’s surely not an impromptu?”

O dear no! nor original neither. I heard, O, such a wise-looking man! say it the other day, and it just came into my head, and I don’t think it’s a bit more ridiculous as I used it than as he did, and I’m sure you wouldn’t have laughed at *him*—nobody *could*. They looked as if they quite thought the world *would* come to an end, or do something it ought not, if Mr. Warfield was not returned,—and I don’t see why they shouldn’t! you know somebody very wise said—wrote, I mean,—

“What great events from little causes spring!”

Ah! now you are laughing again, and you look *so* nice and kind. I'm sure you couldn't say anything but *yes* now. Think!—the Conservative Interest!—and two belles!”

Lady Upton's smiles vanished.

“My dear Flora,” she said, “do you know you are just a little pertinacious? Be content, Isabel has not the slightest pretensions to be a belle,—as she will soon discover when the time comes for her to make the experiment; and, as I before said, she is too young.”

“Now, don't snub me, please,” answered the incorrigible, “but *do* let us go together, this once, just to show how mistaken I am! You see, it *can* only be for once, because if nobody will speak to us, you know, why, naturally, we shan't want to go any more,—now shall we? I believe that's logical.”

“Give it up, Flora,” said Sir Harry, quietly. “Don't you see it's of no use? We're *all* too young; if Isabel is, *I* must be, and I shall take my mother's word for it.”

These words dropped amongst them like a shot. Isabel trembled for the coming storm; even Flora paled a little and was silent, while Lady Upton looked across at him in sudden

consternation. It was long since he had said such a thing, having found that it only kept himself at home, without doing Isabel any good. But, whenever he *had* said it, he had held to it, however great the attraction. And she knew he would do so now. It was hard, very hard. For once she was acting for Isabel's advantage; she really thought it better for her to be older before she went into society, and she was met like this!

"Harry," she said, "you are wrong and foolish. A boy is quite different. I assure you I am acting for Isabel's good!"—And there was a sound of appeal in her voice.

He met it with a smile of scornful incredulity, and kept silence.

She had no power to touch him, and she knew it, and felt it bitterly. He cared nothing for her wishes,—would not feel the least trouble at her disappointment if he stayed away. And yet what could she have done for him that she had not done? He was her one thought in life; she would make any sacrifice for him,—give him any earthly thing within her power,—*had* given him all that heart could wish—all but liberty. She made

up her mind swiftly, with a certain bitterness. If they *would* do it—let them; if they should suffer for it—let them! They deserved it. She would not give up her pleasure, her one delight,—to see her son, *hers*, among the crowd of other women's sons,—the handsomest, brightest, most winning of them all!

The silence had lasted hardly a minute, yet it lay on them like a weight, and through it the ticking of the clock sounded loud and clear; only they counted minutes instead of seconds between every beat. Lady Upton broke it with an effort.

"I am strangely unfortunate in my children," she said, "that they regard my wishes as nothing, unless as a reason for acting against them. Isabel shall go, Harry; but, remember, it is against my will and against my judgment. If evil comes of it, look to it; it will be your doing and not mine."

"O, mamma! I *do* care for your wishes," cried Isabel, "and I'm sure you know best. I would rather stay at home,—much rather."

"It is easy to say so *now*, Isabel," replied her mother, "the matter is settled, let me hear no more of it."

Harry got up and walked to the window, feeling foolish and uncomfortable. He put his hands in his pockets,—he took them out,—then put one in again, and drummed on the pane with the other. His heroic resolutions and solemn preparations for the combat looked woefully ridiculous in sight of this sudden and easy victory; his loud flourish of trumpets had heralded—nothing! He half turned and opened his mouth to speak, then shut it again and resumed his tattoo on the window,—in short, he felt and looked like a fool.

But Flora was in a state of unalloyed delight, and luckily filled up the interval with expressions thereof.

“O, dear Lady Upton,” she cried; “how charming! Thank you a thousand times! Evil! What evil can there be? And if there is, we’ll say like—like a very shocking person, ‘Evil, be thou my good!’ And we’ll make it into good, too; I’ll take it all on my shoulders, I’m not the least afraid! Oh, I’m so delighted I positively don’t know what I’m saying. Don’t, please, think I’m going to talk in that way in public, and refuse to have me with you; that would be killing! No, we’ll be as wise, and as

sensible, and as quiet as—as anything: perfect models.”

Sir Harry suddenly ceased his performance on the window and crossed the room to his mother. Poor fellow, he couldn't help looking rather sheepish again when he stood and began to speak, despite his efforts.

“Mother,” he said, “it's very fine, would you like a drive? We might go to look at those cottages you were speaking of,—there's time enough before dinner; and I could drive you in the pony carriage, if you like.”

A flush of pleasure rose in her dark face as she answered:

“I should like it very much. You didn't know it, but the reason I wanted you to go with me was, that they might be done as you liked. We can look over them together.”

“Very well,” he said; “as you like. But if we are to do all that, there's no time to spare. I'll go and order the carriage at once.”

“Do,” she said; “I shall be ready in ten minutes.”

Was this the same woman we saw so short a time before? The frown had left the brow,

the hard expression was gone from the eyes, the lips smiled.

All for a drive with her son? Pshaw, ridiculous! you say. Whoever you be that say it, young or old, wait till you love one human creature with all your heart and soul, or remember the time when you did so love one, and you will know that it was cause enough. We do not measure our joys and sorrows by reason; the joys are few enough as it is: what they would be then, God only knows.

Lady Upton's heart was full of joy; and, hard as she was, I cannot but sympathise with her, poor woman! it came to her so seldom! True, it was her own fault: it might have been a frequent guest, if she could but have given up her will and let her son go free; if she could only have learned that *that* was the readiest way to bring him to her side; if, in fact, she could have changed her nature. Which of us is wise and perfect? Let him cast the stone. She was *what* she was; and if she made others suffer, suffered too. So let us not grudge the passing joy that filled her heart until it overflowed, even on Isabel.

"You girls will have a long afternoon," she said; "suppose you settle what dresses you are to wear on this wonderful occasion. Don't forget, Flora, you have promised me two belles: I shall hold you to your word."

"O, mamma, thank you!" said Isabel; "Do you mean that I may have what I like?"

"If Pearson thinks it suitable, you may."

"O, Lady Upton, I've got the most splendid idea," said Flora. "Let us be dressed alike—it will be charming!"

"Hardly, I think," said her ladyship, still gaily—she was so happy. "Isabel would look quite out of character in your tropical plumage, and, rank treason though it be, I really have some doubt if *you* would look quite so well without it. I should recommend contrast."

"Ah me!" said Flora, with affected sadness; "you see I am the middling kind of creature that needs adorning; but Isabel shines forth amid perfect simplicity."

"Perfect nonsense, you infatuated girl! You had better run to Pearson, or you'll perpetrate some great absurdity."

"And we really have *carte blanche*," said Flora, "subject to her approval?"

"Carte blanche," replied her ladyship, as she went to put on her bonnet.

Which of the three closeted in the old nursery at Upton Hall that day was the happiest? Flora, Isabel, or Pearson? It would be difficult to say; but I am inclined to think it was Pearson. To have the pleasure of arranging for her darling, and adorning her; of knowing that she was going to be happy, and admired and sought after,—for of course there was no doubt on *that* subject;—really, I do think she had the best of it, notwithstanding the flutter of spirits, and hope, and joy, that filled the hearts and employed the tongues of the two eager girls.

But, whichever had the pre-eminence, all the three were happy, and sat there happily; and happily did Lady Upton and her son wind in and out among the shady lanes. It was a happy day,—a day to be marked with a white stone; the happiest day for its inhabitants that old Upton Hall had seen for many a long year.

CHAPTER III.

THE day, the great day of the garden party at Warfield Chase had arrived, and sent a thrill of hope and expectation through fair bosoms for miles and miles around ; nay, I believe it caused excitement in many hearts that beat under waistcoats, though of course the owners would not have admitted it ; for, Warfield Chase was a mystery !

Not a very remote nor ancient mystery, certainly, but all the more piquant on that very account. What can be more aggravating than a mystery, if not at your doors, at your fields ? a mystery of which you can catch an occasional glance in driving past, a mystery not shut in by bolts and bars, but only enclosed in park palings ; and yet as effectually guarded as if it were buried in a dungeon ? A mystery that will not let you forget it, but is always tor-

menting you, and putting itself in your way, and saying, "Here I am, find me out!"

It had not always been a mystery. There were men and women living who could remember when the father of the present owner brought home his bride, a fair young girl, open as the day, with whom mystery had nought to do. Then light and laughter filled the old place, and drove out every lurking ghost, carriages and horses were ever in the avenue coming and going, light feet moved amongst the flowers in the gardens, and low sweet voices mingled merrily with the murmur of the plashing fountain; it was a bright, happy English home. For one short year. Then came the mystery. What it was, why it was, whence it came, none knew; they could not even guess. One day carriages drove up as usual to the lodge gates, but found no admittance; they came again and again on other days, for the house was pleasant, and the fair young bride had found favour in their eyes; but never again did those gates uncloset to them. There was no reason, no excuse; the lodge-keeper had orders not to admit anyone; that was all. Naturally it made a stir in the neighbourhood

for a time, and many were the stories, one more improbable than the other, told to account for it. By degrees interest and speculation died away, and the Warfields and their doings would have dropped out of mind and memory, as they had done out of society, had it not been for an occasional glimpse of a pale, drooping face and figure driven along the country roads, and a weekly sight of Mr. and Mrs. Warfield in their pew at church.

Out of these slight materials the mystery had grown, till now strange fancies hovered about the gloomy, silent place; and the young, who had never been within its gates, looked towards it with a yearning curiosity, not unmixed with a delightful thrill of fear, when they passed it in the dusk; or when the moonlight threw long, weird shadows about its grounds. Once, when old Mr. Warfield died, they had tried to break in upon the long isolation which they thought would never willingly be kept up by a man of thirty; and on one day the lodge gates had opened to them and they had penetrated to the hall door; but there they stopped. Their admission at all was a mistake; not having been expected, it had not been forbidden, but

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all who came after that first day found themselves excluded as rigorously as ever.

It did seem strange; and yet there was no mystery, absolutely none. No mystery, that is, but the mystery of pride; and folly and weakness, mysteries indeed which play wondrous pranks upon this mortal stage.

Mr. Warfield, the elder, at five and twenty years of age, fell passionately in love with a certain brilliant beauty, proposed, and was accepted. As he was dressing to go to church on his wedding morning, he got a letter telling him that she had eloped the night before with a duke. An every-day tale;—the only variations being that the chief part was played by a duke, and that they left him in ignorance till the very day that was to have seen him married. An every-day tale;—and he took it in an every-day way. His heart was sore, his spirit wounded, and “A wounded spirit, who can bear?” He sought healing and balm in reckless dissipation but he found only stupefaction and temporary deadness, followed by sharp awakening and keen self-loathing. Then he fled; into the quiet country, where he believed that God and goodness still

dwelt, to an old friend of his father's, a clergyman. There he found rest and peace, and—still the every-day tale—attached himself to the clergyman's daughter, a fresh, simple country girl, as being the very opposite of her who had so marred his life. Soon he asked her of her father, and they were married. He took his wife home to Warfield Chase, and was content. The past faded, and he learned to wonder at the agonies he had suffered for a heartless woman; and to laugh at the memory of her luring smiles. Hope beckoned him, a child was coming to him, a bright future lay before him; he was content. Still the every-day tale. The Present pushing out the Past and hiding it, and burying it till it is a forgotten thing. Men whose dreams have faded, whose fair young hopes are dead, whose very spirits have fainted within them at thought of their misery and woe, forget it all, and rejoice in the sunshine, and inhale the sweet breath of the flowers, and live, and are content.

So he lived a year.

Then, out of the fulness of her heart, his wife told *him* a tale, an every-day tale too, of a young girl's passing fancy for a curate-cousin.

What was he that he should judge her? How would *his* life have looked beside hers? But he *did* judge her, without mercy. She bowed her head beneath the storm of cruel, cutting words of scorn; and would fain have died there. Her wretched abasement touched him not one whit, and he laughed her vows of love and faith to scorn. All the fair building of his hopes was laid level with the ground; he felt himself tricked, deceived, beguiled; jilted by one woman because she found a nobler mate; married by another for his money and estate, while her heart and soul were given already: and he cursed her in the bitterness of his spirit, and thought the day of his birth had been an evil day. All the love in him was turned to wrath, the kindness to gall, and he had no pity for the young, tender woman who loved him truly: who bore his child. He gave his orders, and closed his house, and shut her off from all the world—to save his honour as he told her—and she never murmured; the heart was crushed out of her by those cruel words, whose meaning she hardly knew. But he was not appeased; his stern, repulsive coldness never softened, never changed; and it killed her.

Slowly she pined, and drooped and died ; very, very slowly ; dying is not easy, and “ we die not by wishing.” Presently a little daughter nestled in her bosom, and she tried to live for it, who had no other love ; then came a son, and for him the father *did* care ; she even lived to bear another little girl ; and then the long suffering was over, and she laid her weary head to rest, with a thankful sigh.

Her husband buried her out of his sight, but he did not forgive nor forget ; and never again opened his house nor associated with his kind. His son became his world, and he devoted his life to training and teaching him, and casing him in armour that should make him proof against the trials that had wrecked his own life. There was such to be found. Courage, Patience, Love, would have preserved him, and brought him off the conqueror, scarred and wounded it may be, but still safe ; but he chose none of these. No, the shield, and buckler, and sword he had found for his child were all comprised in one mighty talisman, “ Unbelief ! ” This was to bear him scatheless through the fight, and land him unharmed

upon the farther shore. This was his teaching, and his system,—“Believe *not*, and thou shalt be saved!” This was the Gospel he preached to the frank-eyed child that sat upon his knees, and looked up at him in enquiring wonder; this was the wisdom he taught to the eager, trusting boy, still ready to be “candid, and generous, and just”—for the young heart is not a natural soil for such seed, and it needs much care and watching to make it grow. Still, it *did* grow; for the sower never wearied, and whatever else he taught,—were it history, language, morals,—ever mingled with it, by precept, or inference, or warning, the *one* lesson —“Trust not, believe not!”

The child loved his sisters and would seek them out. Another opening for a warning,—so well given, that, ere he grew to manhood, he shunned them as something noxious and treacherous, in whom could be no truth. For, as a climax, to crown his teaching, the father told the son his mother’s story. How turned, and twisted, and distorted, God only knew! He meant it for the truth, and his son so received it; and, when he had heard it, lost the

one woman who, in heaven or on earth, is still a refuge for every man, however miserable and betrayed—his mother!

His younger sister, Mabel, when she was seventeen, put the seal to all his father's words. She had lived and grown up in that strange, sad house; lived with her sister, such weary, hopeless years! till she could bear it no longer. One day, she was missing. A letter was found in her room, begging forgiveness, and saying that she could not live so hated and despised; she had gone with one who loved her, an artist she had met sketching in the woods; when her letter was found she would be married.

Here was enough to sting the father into life, if aught of father still lived in him; but it did not—not for his daughters. He read the letter, and showed it to Gerald, then took it back and threw it in the fire, saying, with a cold sneer,

“You see, Gerald? Could a woman be better guarded? She has never gone into society, never gone outside the park alone—and yet—you see. Take warning, boy, let the race perish! Never, as you value either, give your honour or your happiness into the keeping—of a *woman*!

But Gerald was moved, he had not quite hardened yet.

"Let me go to seek her, father," he said, "perhaps she will come back, and the scandal may be hushed; let me at least see that she is married: it touches our honour," and a deep flush mounted in the dark face.

"No, I say, no!" replied the father. "Let her go. Never speak of her, never *think* of her again. She is dead—let her be buried."

So it was done. More letters came, they followed the first into the fire—unread. At last they ceased.

Still, the years passed on—for the lonely, wretched sister who was once her mother's precious first-born baby but now a hard, angular woman, with a cold, bitter face, and dead, hopeless eyes; what light of hope or joy ever shone on her to bring the life there?—for the father, satisfied with his work;—for the son, who grew daily into the father's likeness.

At last, the father's years were ended, and he died, leaving his work complete. Since then, Gerald Warfield had drawn a little nearer to his sister; he was alone with her in the world, and even *his* training had not fitted him

to dwell in utter solitude. But he had held himself aloof from all other companionship, and lived a hermit life.

And now, suddenly, after long years, all the world, all the world that lived within a certain radius, that is, was going to Warfield Chase !

A new wonder—not without a cause.

Mr. Warfield had been asked to stand for the county in the place of a gentleman just deceased. His writings had made an impression on the Conservatives, who wanted such men, and they asked him; warning him at the same time that a contest might be expected.

At the thought of effort and strife he roused into new life, all his dormant energies awoke and imperiously demanded play. He could have laughed when one very honourable and lugubrious gentleman dwelt on the difficulties to be encountered, the expenses to be met; like a war-horse long confined, he sniffed the battle afar, and plunged into it with reckless joy. Welcome, battle and strife! Welcome, society, canvassing, bribery and corruption! Welcome, anything under the sun that should deliver him from his long monotony and stagnation!

So he accepted, with thanks, the honour done

to him; and, amid other preparations, issued invitations to a garden party, which occurred to him as an excellent means of collecting the greatest possible number of people, and amusing them in various ways.

And now, at length, the day had arrived, as all days will, and he sat in his library thinking thereon.

A strong, dark, handsome man, of thirty-five,—a handsome man, undoubtedly; yet that was hardly the impression any one would receive in looking at him. Power, and will and self-reliance were in every line of the dark face, and looked coldly out of the stern, black eyes. His hair, also black, was cut rather short, and a small moustache left the massive jaw fully visible. People on seeing him sometimes thought “what a terrible enemy that man would make!” Never, “what a faithful friend!” If I were a painter, and wanted to give the world a masterpiece, I would paint a Lucifer, a Son of the Morning, though fallen, and take Gerald Warfield for my model.

Yet he was an honourable gentleman. A man of high intellect and indomitable courage, of spotless truth and stainless life, no hidden

blots on *his* escutcheon! he was, too, as he thought, a Christian. He mentally accepted the system of Christianity, and every Sunday saw him in his place at church, often listening to platitudes and truisms which he would not have tolerated in any other cause.

Surely this is a perfect character; there are not many such. What did he lack? Aye, what?

Only faith, hope, charity,—these three; which are life here, the greatest of which shall be life hereafter.

Call it faith, belief, or trust, still the strongest power on earth from man to man, as from man to God. “*As thou hast believed so be it done unto thee.*” With no irreverence but the deepest conviction that the truth, the essence of wisdom, is in the words of the God-man; that, as they reach to the greatest heights, so they penetrate to the lowest depths; as they comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge, so they fit the petty needs of every living soul,

“Flow through all space, extend through all extent,
Spread undivided, operate unspent.”

With the deepest conviction of all this, I say, do I use them here. Only let the faith be

large and strong, strong to hope and to wait; let it trust to the uttermost; and *as* it believes, *so* shall it receive.

Belief! The mightiest power, the dearest possession of every human being, which shames the hypocrite and subdues the scoffer, which sweetens life and conquers death; which says to *all*—aye, to the vilest and most degraded wretch on earth, “Believe, and thou shalt be saved!”

O, wretched father! what madness had come over thee to uproot so carefully in the heart of thy dear son this most precious plant, and sow in its stead unbelief, which is despair.

Better have left him alone, uncared for and untended; better have let him riot, unchecked in all wild excess; nay, better even have thrown him among the wretched crowd of children who, God forgive us! grow up in our streets into men and women, and never hear the name of Christ, yet have *some* love, *some* hope, *some* faith; who, starving, keep the last bit of bread for baby; who, in some poor, miserable, blind way, *do* trust, and love and help each other;—better, *far* better, have left him to this, *than*

brought him up an honourable gentleman, and yet so sneered at, and blighted and seared every budding shoot of faith, that it is cut down, down to the very roots, and he has none. None, save—poorest of all poor idols! in himself!

He is sitting thinking. Thinking of the conflict into which he has entered, and rejoicing in it, triumphing in anticipation; for he will win—he knows it. Has he not power? Power of intellect to write and to speak; to launch wit, and epigram, and thundering denunciation against the man who opposes him; power of landlord to coerce many tenantry; power of money to buy men—body and soul. Power! Yes; he rejoices in his power, and he will use it—to the uttermost. Then a shade crosses his brow and a sneer settles on his lips. After all, what is it worth? The battle is dear to him,—but the victory? Dust and ashes! Class prejudices incline him to the Conservative party; but he struggles for no high principles, no noble faith; he does not believe in them. In his *no* creed, every man has his price; and, mostly, a very poor price. Though he was alone, he laughed aloud: “What fools we are! Petty

creatures of an hour, striving and struggling, rushing hither and thither after any bauble;—busy, and important and wise—as ants on an anthill!”

His meditations were interrupted at this sublime point by a knock at the door, which opened on his invitation, and gave entrance to Miss Warfield. She went up to him hurriedly; her strong, hard face bearing marks of agitation, and a nervous fluttering about her whole person—usually so rigidly still.

“Gerald,” she said, “will you excuse my appearing to-day?”

“Why, Priscilla?” he said, looking at her in astonishment; “what is the matter with you? What has come over you? Are you ill?”

“No; not ill,” she answered, “but I feel so strange. I had no idea I should care for a crowd of stupid people, but now the day has come, I feel that I can’t do it; I *can’t* receive them. The very thought of it makes me tremble all over. Pray excuse me, Gerald; it won’t be of the least consequence, you know.”

He looked at her curiously for a minute or so, without speaking. Then he said,

"Well, women *are* extraordinary creatures! I have heard it and read it, but now I *see* it. Who in the world *could* have dreamed of *you* taking to nervousness! for that is the interesting complaint you describe: you feel strange—you tremble—you can't. Nervous, by all the gods! neither more nor less! Miss Warfield nervous!" and he laughed.

"I can't help it, Gerald," she said, humbly; "I know it's silly, but I can't help it; and if you *do* make me see them, I shall do something absurd, and make myself a laughing stock—I know I shall."

"Sit down, Priscilla," he said, sternly, "and listen to me."

She sat down opposite to him, and listened in mute patience, while he continued,

"I have set my mind on winning this election; indeed, I am pledged. One of the necessary things is to make myself popular, and to this end I am going to give a series of parties. Now the people won't come if you don't receive them; so you see it *is* of consequence, and you must. Do you understand?—*Must*. Good heavens! to think that I might lose through a whim of *yours*!"

She answered in a voice that trembled, despite her efforts to keep it steady,

"If it's so important, Gerald, of course I will try."

"Try! You *must*, I tell you. I should have thought that, being a woman, you would have been only too ready to seize the chance of playing the great lady, and receiving in state: these are the things that women love, they say."

"Gerald, you are very hard," she said, with something of defiance, raised by the sneer.

"Am I? Well, stop away, then. What are a man's honour and ambition against a woman's whim? Let them go! I was a fool to think it, but I really *did* think that you had some interest in me and my career, and lo! the first time I want you, you are—*nervous*!" And he looked into her eyes with his sneering smile, then laughed aloud, and added: "Good heavens! that I should have counted in anything upon a woman!"

"God knows I care for you, Gerald." And she flashed back the look, as she added, bitterly, "Perhaps I shouldn't, if I had anything else in the wide world to care for; but as it is, I *do*."

And as you really want me, I will do my best, and try to play the gracious, easy hostess—I! that have been shut up from a baby! And shall I tell you what will be the end?" she cried, passionately, after a minute's pause: "When I have grown used to the life, and want to *be* the great lady, you will be caught by some pretty baby face, and bring it here to rule, rule over me! or turn me, oh, so lonely! into the wide, wide world!"

"Really, Priscilla," he answered, mockingly, "this is getting tragic! only the part is overdone. If my marriage is your only fear, you may dwell in blessedness for ever! *I* marry!" And again he laughed. "Look here; I'd rather take a pistol and blow out my brains! And—if ever the gods *do* take away my wits, and leave me to make such a fool of myself, why—you do it for me! You have my full authority, and it will be the best proof of affection you can possibly give me!"

She answered him never a word, but gave him a strange, cold smile of utter unbelief—one of his own it might have been; then rose, and swiftly left the room.

He was alone, free to pursue his thoughts

again, but they flowed no longer in the old channel; the current had changed. His eyes had followed his sister out, and he muttered, half aloud: "As it was in the days of old, I suppose, '*Varium et mutabile semper fœmina!*'"

And as he spoke, all the beauty of his face was masked and hidden by a bitter sneer, which rested there while he pursued the new course of his meditations. Surely, no gentle, nor high, nor noble thoughts were they, that thus expressed themselves!

CHAPTER IV.

THE day of Mr. Warfield's first party was a day to be remembered. Nature, art, and the goddess Fortune—vulgarly, good luck—all smiled upon him, and the result was worthy of the rare coincidence.

Nature gave him a day of days in the rose of months, the month of roses—happy June. The merry sunshine played about the house and brightened the massive, dismal front, that had grown sad like its owners; it rested lovingly on the brilliant flowers of the broad terrace garden, and made them glow into yet brighter life; it lay in large sheets on the level lawn, and darted and quivered under the fine old trees with which it was dotted, as their branches moved in the gentle, balmy air; it kissed the petals of the thousand roses until the white were all one blush, and the crimson

burned deeper still; it rested over the wide park, encroaching lazily on the massive shadows to reach the deer couched under the giant trees; then, as lazily, retreating. The hushed air was full of stillness—summer stillness; the rustling of myriad leaves, the hum of countless insects, the plashing of a tiny brook that wound amongst the trees, and made a little waterfall in a mossy dell.

Art gave him delicious hidden music that seemed to come from fairy-land, and floating on, bear with it lovely forms that gently floated too. It gave him pleasant seats in shady nooks, and pretty tents; and, though last, not least, a most exquisite repast; for these fairy forms were, alas! very mortal, and could by no means exist on sunshine, music, and flowers.

Fortune gave him the first public appearance of Isabel and Flora—no small boon; for even in the quiet country novelty has charms: and pouring out her treasures while she was in the mind, as is the way of the fickle goddess, caused a certain high authority, in a fit of spleen, to order a detachment of Her Majesty's Incomparables down to Bransford, where they had just replaced a portion of an infantry regi-

ment—to their extreme disgust: in the height of the season, too! it was *too* cruel! But His Royal Highness, who had been bored with tales of various pranks and performances of sundry of those distinguished gentlemen, and who hated to be bored, pounced down upon them suddenly; and being, for that time only, directed by the goddess in question, who is notoriously blind, and had, besides, her own ends to serve—a great help to blindness, by the bye—so arranged matters that the best men were sent marching, while the blackest sheep remained to browse in peace in their favourite pastures, only more quietly for a time.

Having done so much, she would not leave her work, but hung over it lovingly; and pleased herself in adding yet another touch to make it perfect. She walked with Mr. and Miss Warfield round the lawn before the guests arrived, and showed them all things ready; she touched their senses with lovely sights, sweet sounds, and pleasant odours; she cleared away the traces of the morning storm, leaving to Miss Warfield just enough of passionate feeling to raise the character of her face, and place her above the petty fears and

difficulties which had attacked her; she reminded Mr. Warfield that this was a move in a great game that must be played to win; and then she stood with the two under the spreading branches of a grand old oak, on the edge of the shrubbery which divided the lawn from the park, while they received their guests.

Truly her work was well done; and as she saw the graceful dignity with which Miss Warfield met the shoals of people that poured in upon them, she was content. But Mr. Warfield did not please her quite so well. Polished, easy, courteous, he was; perfect in manner; yet there was no attraction about him. Strangers people went up and spoke to him, and strangers they turned away; there was no approach, no meeting; he made no way at all: and the goddess began to frown and think of desertion. Was the man made of stone? Had he no touch of nature, of feeling, to strike the electric spark in other hearts and make a way between him and them? She was on the point of turning away in a pet, when a fresh group appeared—a group of her own providing, whom she had forgotten; her memory is but short, alas! At sight of it her

smiles returned, and she kept gaily to her post by her favourite of the hour, and resolved to leave him no more—that day. For here was the means to rouse him into life, to wake the passions from their long sleep, and turn the statue into a living man.

The group came up. A pretty group it was. First, Lady Upton and Flora. Lady Upton, a fine woman always, and well dressed, had on her arm Flora Bellairs—sunny Flora; in airy, cloudy, sweeping white robes, with bright purple touches; carnations in the little straw hat that lay on her golden hair; and in her hand a bouquet of the most brilliant blossoms she could find.

A lovely picture! So thought Mr. Warfield, as his eyes fell on her; so thought his sister, with a pang of fear; so thought the many guests scattered over the lawn;—and a low murmur of admiration passed along them.

“A lovely picture!” thought Mr. Warfield, “but a little dazzling,”—and he smiled and greeted her with polished deference, just a little warmed in her warmth, as the coldest things must needs be; and she passed on, and then—why, then—he saw Isabel.

She came towards him, just touching her brother's arm, and proud and well he looked beside her ! but for Mr. Warfield he might as well not have been there ; he saw only Isabel. Isabel, in the same pure, flowing robes as Flora, only the touches of colour were of a pale, delicate green ; her hat was wreathed with lilies of the valley ; and her bouquet, one of Flora's fairy bouquets kept specially for her, was a bunch of moss rosebuds, fringed by white lilies and ferns.

He looked at her, and did *not* think what a lovely picture, did not think any thing about a picture ; did not think at all. But a sense of coolness and freshness came over him, and vague ideas of snowdrops and violets in a shady place. When he addressed her, she raised her eyes, those sweet brown eyes ! and their glance sent a strange thrill, a thrill more of pain than pleasure, through his being. She spoke ;—and her voice fell on his ear as the voice of one in a dream, murmuring long forgotten music ; like a dreamer, he listened when it ceased, to hear it begin again, and wondered that it did not. *Like* a dreamer ! he *was* a dreamer ; he had left the country of reality, of stern, hard

facts and figures; and swiftly, suddenly, had entered dream-land; fallen right into it;—he was in love! Ah! that wicked Fortune! she was greatly to blame! But she never troubles herself with future risks and fears, only showers on her favourites present favours for present ends, and for the future—why, let *them* look to it! Long ere that time comes, she will have chosen other loves, and the fate of the old will trouble her not at all!

So she brought Isabel before Mr. Warfield's eyes to wake him into life. And he awoke; to a new, sweet life, that entered in and took possession of him.

What was it that he loved? This simple girl, with her limited ideas and untried nature? How could it be? No, he loved another, a creature of his brain, that he had long been learning to love; that had somehow struggled into being, amid all his scorns and doubts, and made itself a place in the cold, vacant heart. This creature that he loved was very fair and sweet, and pure beyond earth's loveliest, rarest daughters; gentle, loving, clinging; seeing with his eyes, thinking his thoughts, hanging on his words. Cold, and distant, and reserved,

she moved amongst the crowd, a thing apart; then turned to him, and waked to love and passion; aye, strong, delirious passion;—but all for him! A curious being he had made, a sort of compound of a wax Madonna and a Medora in private life; for him, the Medora—the wax Madonna for all the world beside.

This ideal had lived and grown, and slumbered long in the depths of his soul; and now, lo! it sprang full-grown into active, conscious life, and clothed itself in flesh, and stood before him—Isabel.

And he loved it. Loved it with all loves: the dreamy tenderness of the ideal; the fresh, simple, first love of the boy; the repressed passion of the long, lonely, wanting years;—with all the full power of the man, body, soul, and spirit.

It was his first love; his first love and his last. Now a first love at thirty-five—and there is such a thing, though you may doubt it—a first love at thirty-five is, I say, always a dangerous thing, but such a love as this is fearful. Fearful! Big with coming storm and woe; but for the present, heavenly sweet! Who would not nurse it in his heart, and see

the world under its wondrous magic, and have his dead, grey life lightened by the glamour of its hope and joy, making of earth, a heaven; where, though pain and sorrow still dwell, they change their nature and show themselves beautiful, transformed in the sunshine of love? Who would not?—let the end be what it may! Say it is very bitterness. Still, he has lived, has loved; has tasted the very sweetness of this mortal life. Who, with the tempting cup held to the very lips, *who* would refuse—even with full knowledge? But it is not given us to choose. To some, the sweet; to some, the bitter; to some, fond, watching love; to some, cold, lonely years;—and God is over all. So let us take our portion, and drink and be thankful.

So Mr. Warfield stood before his love. *His* love? Ah, yes! love takes possession soon, and keeps no count of time; for it, time is not. He stood before his love and looked into her eyes, and spoke some few common words, no words of love, he was not *quite* mad; and she passed on her way, and left him there—another man! Dame Fortune's work was done, and she might go or stay, his way was clear. No

cynic this; no cold, polished, speaking statue; but a living, loving man, filled with his new delight, and spreading its overflow on all around.

How far was Flora right? Verily, I believe that Isabel did gain him his election; but as to the Great Conservative Party, and Europe, and the Civilised World; why, possibly they might have survived, even had he lost it!

Now, out of the fulness of his heart he spoke, and hearts responded; before, his heart had been full of emptiness, and emptiness had met him. Now, faces smiled upon him, he was of their kind:—notably those said ill-used Incomparables, who came in for his warm welcome; appearing late upon the scene, as befitted their dignified reputation.

To suppose you ignorant of the Incomparables would be an insult; not to know *them* argues yourself unknown indeed! Still as you may possibly not know which particular gentlemen honoured Mr. Warfield's garden party with their presence, I will introduce them in all due form. They were usually considered worth knowing; it was a subject on which they, at least, had no doubts. I doubt

greatly, by the bye, if they had doubts on *any* subject.

Colonel the Hon. Hugh Fitzgerald. Grey-headed, tender-hearted. Rather literary. An officer, a gentleman and a hero. Not a dancing nor a flirting man. Come to support the true blue.

Major Delisle, a dark handsome man of thirty, with black hair, long drooping whiskers and soft, velvety black eyes—equally known in the regiment as “Beauty” and “Stoph;” the latter being the final result of the various modifications through which Mephistopheles had passed, while being adapted to every day use.

Captain Sir Frederick Popham, Bart., otherwise “Pop.” The most tremendous swell in the regiment; having the slowest drawl, the laziest lounge, the most wonderful whiskers, the most immovable glass, and the most astounding boots! He was a tall, light-haired, fair man, with grey eyes; square-shouldered and powerfully built, he moved as if possessed by exhaustion. He was a great favourite amongst his fellows, who, though they did laugh at him, thought no gathering complete without “Pop.”

Captain Johnstone, *alias* "Mums," remarkable for extreme taciturnity; he rarely, very rarely, opened his mouth for speaking purposes; it was supposed that he was so accustomed to its being occupied by pipe or cigar, that when it was empty, he forgot his powers. Strong in silence, he had a weakness—horses.

Lieutenant Marston, or "Fanny," so called from his fair, clear face and bright cheeks; sadly deceptive they were, for not a man among them was more ready for any daring, or any devilry than Her Majesty's trusty and well-beloved Francis Marston.

These, with Lieut. Bolton,—who was Lieut. Bolton and nothing more,—and Charley Dobree, an audacious, mischievous curled darling, who went about with a sketch book, and had a turn for comic verses which spared no one, not even his Colonel, represented the flower of Her Majesty's Incomparables, so discriminatingly banished by the powers that be.

To these gentlemen Mr. Warfield gave a warm welcome, and they lingered a few minutes by him and Miss Warfield, discharging their duty of showing attention to their hostess: for they were a right honourable corps and

always did their duty loyally, in camp or field, in court or grove—as they saw it. It must be admitted that their views were in some cases, not doubtful, but peculiar, remarkably peculiar, but such as they were they acted up to them; which is more than the transcendentalists *can* do to theirs. They were surely “*sans peur*”—not a man among them but would have walked as coolly under a shower of bullets as under a shower of hail; and for the “*sans reproche*,”—well, not one would have cheated, or lied, or failed in any due courtesy, even to a washer-woman. According to their lights they *were* “*sans reproche*,” and if their lights were rather dark, possibly some others, that think themselves wondrous bright and shining may be so too.

“Ah!” says some intelligent reader, whose lights are by no means dark, “for the bullets, well; we all know *that*; but, for the rest we also know that “*noblesse oblige*,” hardly extends now-a-days as far as courtesy to middle-aged, plain, common people; that is *un peu trop fort*. A fact, I assure you, nevertheless. Don’t take away the character of my dear Incomparables, and liken them to a regiment I once heard of, whose Lieutenant-Colonel begged for an intro-

duction to a sweet young girl, a *débutante*, and engaged her for a dance. The time came, but the Colonel did *not*. No, he sent a message of excuse, giving as a reason, that he had danced his toes through his boots! Is this more credible? The reason I never knew, but the fact *is* a fact. Now the blackest of the Incomparables' black sheep would never have been such a snob; nor suffered in the regiment a man who was.

They did their duty, then, like men, as ever, in shining on their host and hostess; and having done it, proceeded to shed their beams on all the world; that is, on all the world that pleased them; causing, as they moved, a flutter of excitement and hope in the breast of many a fair girl who dearly longed to show herself in triumph, stamped by the gracious approbation of an Incomparable! Happy, she who caught the passing fancy!—really, happier far she who escaped it, and had not to bear the dangerous glances, and soft, low flattery of these veterans in flirtation, with whom it was almost a point of honour “to love and to ride away;”—only she didn't think so.

No more dulness, nor chill, nor dragging

now. A genial, brilliant host, passed from group to group, infusing into them his own glad life, and gaining men with a word. He took his world by storm, and achieved a success; a decided, brilliant success. His sister looked at him in wonder, which was not lessened as she perceived his marked attention to Lady Upton; for, as she very wisely observed to herself, Flora Bellairs did not belong to her, though she had come with her, and what was the use of spending so much time on her?

Lady Upton received him very graciously; a woman is hardly ever old enough, perhaps one might even say, is *never* old enough, to disdain being distinguished by the hero of the hour; and her ladyship was gracious accordingly, accepting the homage as her natural due; so gracious, that when he had been standing talking to her some minutes, she moved her spreading robes aside, and offered him a seat.

Where they sat they had a good view of all the wide lawn, and the gay, graceful, sparkling figures scattered over it.

"Really, a pretty sight," said her ladyship, sweeping it with her glass; "but *do* look at

that tall man dancing with Miss Upton, what an object he is! Who is he?"

Mr. Warfield *was* looking at him, and he didn't like the sight.

"Does not your ladyship know him?" he replied; "it is Sir Frederick Popham, of Greenfells, adjoining Bellairs Park, you know; but I hear that he has not been down there for years; they say he's never happy away from his regiment, and never goes anywhere by himself. He does look rather foppish, I think."

"Rather foppish!" answered she. "Mr. Warfield, you are merciful. Why he's a perfect specimen of the creature called a 'swell.' How Isabel can dance with him I can't conceive; it is only explicable by the strange infatuation soldiers always exercise on girls, and she is a mere child, too."

"Oh! I doubt if any lady present would refuse him," he replied,—“any dancing lady, that is. Young, rich, a baronet, and in the incomparables; why, he has all the advantages! And he can even dance; look how smoothly he glides along; and I suppose, too, there are people who admire the style to which you object. Believe me, Lady Upton, he is in

no danger of rejection,—candidly, he is a very fine man!”

And, as Sir Frederick and Isabel again whirled past, models of ease and grace, and evidently mutually satisfied with their doings, he muttered something between his teeth which was neither praise nor blessing.

Major Delisle and Flora followed, and looked well; but not like those two; there was no known waltzer equal to Sir Frederick Popham. The languid ease he used to cover his strength and energy—so great an affectation in ordinary life—was here perfection; and he bore Isabel along, without effort or hurry, in quiet, flowing grace—really, “the poetry of motion.”

There was nothing else like it. As they passed people turned to look after them, and Mr. Warfield turned with the rest, and again muttered something between his teeth, and frowned, and fidgetted; then walked abruptly away from Lady Upton, and vowed he would look at them no more, and looked again the very next minute; and, finally, horror of horrors! wished he, too, could dance!

And when the dance ceased, and she was

seated for a little while, he went and told her so, and talked to her, and tried to keep her to himself, which he *did*, for just two minutes; then she was claimed by Charley Dobree—"always in for a good thing," as he said, and coolly led off under his very eyes.

He let her go for that time, promising himself to haunt every quiet moment she had, and get her to give him a little time, instead of a dance, when he would take her away—away from them all;—whither, he knew.

And she? Ah! she was very happy, very bright, very gay. The new, strange incense, mounted to her brain, a spot of colour burned in each cheek, a brilliant light was in her dark eyes, and made them darker; she met, and answered all comers with ready wit and polished grace; the consciousness of her power to please and charm had given her all she lacked, and made her fascinating, irresistible.

Flora should have been content. She was pleased undoubtedly; but, perhaps, she would not have been sorry had Isabel been just a *little* less admired. And yet her royal rights had not been infringed, she reigned undisturbed, the tacitly admitted queen of the day.

Was it not enough? Enough, perhaps, yet not exactly what she wanted. There were two who did not seem to acknowledge her supremacy, two who did open homage to another queen, two who followed Isabel with every flattering tone and word and look that man could give, and these two she wanted. Partly because she had not got them, partly because Mr. Warfield was the notable person, the chief man there; and Sir Frederick Popham, partly because *he* was distinguished in his own style, of which her opinion was different from Lady Upton, and partly—because she wanted him.

Ah! Flora, Flora! there were spots then on the sun! Freely you had given to Isabel love, joy, pleasure—all you could give; but you were not quite generous enough to be willing for her to take and hold what you wanted yourself. Truly, in some cases generosity is an easy virtue, while in others bare justice becomes very heroism.

Flora was not heroic. She had always had what she wanted, and did not at all understand going without it. Regardless of all the other Incomparables at her feet, even of Major Delisle, infinitely superior to Pop in his own

opinion, and that of many others, she endeavoured in all possible ways to attract and interest Sir Frederick Popham; who, on his side, pursued his devotion to Isabel in happy unconsciousness. It was aggravating and absurd, but things will happen so. Major Delisle was devoted to Flora, who didn't want *him* but Sir Frederick, who didn't want *her*, but greatly desired Isabel, who didn't want him, or, indeed, any one, but was greatly wanted by Mr. Warfield.

Major Delisle, who was also used to having his own way, and had reason to think himself irresistible, by no means relished the new position assigned to him. He, Major Delisle, the pet of Duchesses, the desired of Countesses, looked down upon by a mere young country girl, or rather, not looked on at all, "just as if he was any other fellah!" It was *too* absurd! It piqued him; he grew interested in the pursuit, and threw himself into it unreservedly. First he tried leaving her;—she didn't miss him! So he came back, and threw more feeling into the soft, dangerous eyes, and a low, tender tone into the deep voice, and she looked at him and answered with a smile; and then

her eyes wandered away again, and he followed their course, and saw that they rested on "Pop."

"Hang it all, what can she see in Pop?" he exclaimed, mentally of course. And inward irritation and wrath possessed the elegant aristocrat, who sat there in utter quietness, without a touch of "swell" from his hat to his boots, which were also quiet, as quiet as could be made; as was every thing about him. But where would you ever find such?

This wrath surged within him; but what could he do? The days of daggers were over, even were it a case for daggers; so he used his tongue;—a most serviceable weapon that tongue, capable of giving many a sly stab, while openly occupied in praise and admiration. "Make a man look ridiculous, and you may hang him—at least for a woman," his reflections ran; and he spoke:

"Do look at Popham, Miss Bellairs, he waltzes divinely; not a man of us can come near him *there*,"—with the very slightest stress upon the '*there*;' so slight, you could hardly be sure that it existed.

"You don't give faint praise, I see, Major

Delisle," replied Flora, "only *discriminating*. How grateful your friend should be! You are friends, no doubt."

"Friends? Of course we are. You quite mistake, I assure you; we all adore Pop; he's the most good-natured fellow! Always doing something to give us a laugh! Why, only the other day—you don't happen to have 'Pop and the Pig' anywhere about you, Charley?" he continued, turning to Mr. Dobree. "No? That's cruel. It's really a capital thing, Miss Bellairs; one of Charley's best."

"You are an artist, then, Mr. Dobree?" said Flora.

"If you would allow me to attempt your likeness, I might be," responded Charley; "*that* couldn't be caricatured; but somehow—it's really hard on a fellow!—whenever I put pencil to paper, even with the most serious intentions, the lines will screw themselves wrong, and behold! a distorted figure, which makes one laugh—and nothing's more horrid when you wish to be pathetic; and it's all the same if I try to write. Do you know, I once sat down in the most sentimental frame of mind—it was at midnight, the witching hour, and I had

drawn back the curtains to let in the moon-light, so I could see it shining jollily; and I took up my pen—not a pencil—for I wanted to write something that would last. So I took up my pen and dipped it in the ink, then looked at the moon a goodish time—five minutes, I should say; then pumped up the biggest sigh I could, and wrote:

‘O, beautiful moon!’

And there I stuck. The only earthly thing I could think of was, ‘You’ve got up too soon!’ Now don’t laugh, please—it’s a woeful tale. At last, in sheer desperation, I wrote it down under the other:

‘O, beautiful moon!
You’ve got up too soon.’

I looked at it—and I looked at the moon, and then—I went to bed. Now don’t laugh so, please; it hurts a fellow’s feelings when he’s done his best, and is relating his last and greatest attempt at serious poetry. Drawing, alas! same style; so you may judge of its merits.” And Charley heaved a tremendous sigh.

“But, Mr. Dobree, it’s perfectly charming,” said Flora, laughing out; “so beautifully simple!

One might even hope to do something like it oneself—and that is so delightful! Couldn't you continue it now? Do try, please."

"Oh, with pleasure," said Charley. "Inspiration must wait upon your words, whether she's ready or not; and lo! I feel the coming god!" And he jumped to his feet and repeated:

"O, beautiful moon,
You've got up too soon.
Most fair queen of night,
Just put out your light.

"You ridiculous moon!
Your rays are no boon:
Shone on by Flora's,
They simply bore us.

"Gay goddess of flowers!
Bright queen of the hours!
Sol's beams o'er her head!
My friend—go to bed!"

"Stop him, pray stop him, Miss Bellairs!" cried Lieutenant Marston, who had joined the group; "he'll go on for an hour if you don't, and keep me out of the dance I am waiting for in such horrible impatience."

"Nipped in the bud," sighed Charley, as he sank down again; "you little know what you may have killed, Fanny."

"Besides hurting my feelings," added Flora. "Just when I was being celebrated in verse—and *such* verse! to cut it short. It's too cruel. No, I couldn't *think* of dancing with you now, Lieutenant Marston."

"O, weally now, Miss Bellairs, that's *too* hard on a fellah!" said Lieut. Marston. "You don't know what effect it may have. I'm sensitive."

"Then pray sit down," said Flora, "and repent on the ground, if not in the dust, having wounded the sensibilities of others."

"O, pray, Miss Bellairs, do forgive me!"

"When you have repented, perhaps I may, it's too soon yet; besides, it is cool and pleasant here, and I don't want to dance just now."

"From that there *can* be no appeal," said he, bowing low; "Miss Bellairs' wishes are laws which the humblest of her slaves proceeds to obey!"—and he flung himself on the grass at her feet.

"A pretty pose, Fanny," said Major Delisle, "is it original?"

"O yes, very much!" was the answer. "More so, in fact; will you take a lesson?"

"Thanks, no; I prefer the ordinary attitudes of civilisation."

"Pop's, for instance?" said the Lieutenant, smiling, as he saw Sir Frederick again waltzing past. "That fellah must go by steam; nothing else *could* keep it up."

"Ah! that reminds me," said Major Delisle, who had not forgotten,—“that reminds me of ‘Pop and the Pig,’—you really ought to have it, Miss Bellairs, it's so rich.”

"Bosh!" said Captain Johnstone, hearing the last words, as he joined the group of adorers.

"Why can't you let a fellah love his pig in peace, Beauty?" put in the Lieutenant. "You wouldn't like *your* loves published to the world!"—and he laughed,—then added, hastily, "Who would?"

"I, I assure you, shall be delighted to have my affections chronicled," retorted Major Delisle, "when I choose so adorable an object. But if you think Popham too sensitive—poor fellow, he looks it!" he said, laughing, as the indefatigable Sir Frederick again rushed past, "why, of course I'll spare his blushes."

"O, Major Delisle, you really must tell it now," said Flora; "I can't possibly be left in this state of curiosity—a pig does seem such a very funny thing! Think of it grunting and grubbing about!"—and she laughed at the idea, and they all laughed in chorus—giving the Major an excellent opening.

"Well, you must know," he began, "that the morning after we got down to Bransford, Charley rushed into my quarters, screaming with laughter, and cried out, as well as he could, considering the state he was in, 'Come along, instanter! Come and look at Pop, I beseech you! It's the richest thing you ever saw in your life!'

"'Pop's latest, I suppose,' said I coolly; 'what is it?' for I was just at the crisis of one of Balzac's best, and didn't feel disposed to move for 'Pop's latest.'

"'O, yes,' responded Charley, 'don't you wish?' with great impertinence, I must say, considering his subordinate position."

"Come, old fellow," put in Charley, "draw it mild!"

"'O, yes! don't you wish?' said that irre-

pressible youngster," continued the Major, "Not if I know it! Just pitch that yellow rubbish away, and come along,—It's worth it.'

"I went."

"And what did you see," said Flora, eagerly.

"Ah! I havn't quite come to that, yet," said the Major. "It is necessary, for the further elucidation of my story, that I should make known to you that we have a largeish court-yard attached to the barracks, surrounded by a wall; in which wall are two gates, one on each side,—besides the entrance, of course. Why, or wherefore, I don't know, but there they are. Into this court-yard Charley led me, and all I saw at first was a lot of our fellows, nearly all, gathered round one of these gates, going into fits with laughter. They didn't hear us till we were close on them, then they turned and looked at Charley—speak they couldn't—and he went off again; and when I got amongst them, *I* went off. For there was Pop—Pop in perfection—boots, lavender kids and all, bending affectionately over the gate to reach a big, fat, dirty beast of the pork species,

which emitted short grunts of contentment, while he gravely and carefully rubbed its back with a long stick."

"Fact, Miss Bellairs," said Charley, as he laughed again at the remembrance, "and what's more he wouldn't leave off, though we entreated him with tears, *real* tears in our eyes; and vowed that he'd be the death of us. No, there he stood, looking almost as content and imperious as the pig, till I was really forced to run for it and put him down to relieve my mind, or I do think he would have killed me outright. 'Pooaw fellah!' he said, as cool as a cucumber, 'he can't scwatch himself pwopewly, you know, and he *did* so twy! Think how you'd feel yourselves!' And he went on steadily again, amid a fresh roar.

"Aye, but that is not the best of it, Miss Bellairs," said Lieutenant Marston, "you ought to have the sequel. Do you know he actually keeps it up, and scratches the pig's back as regularly as he breakfasts, notwithstanding our united efforts, and I must say we favoured him with all the chaff we knew, and stood round him two or three times, till we found he really would stick to it; and that stopped the fun."

"Touching devotion! Isn't it, Miss Bellairs?" said the Major. "Quite an instance of mutual attraction, sympathetic souls, and that kind of thing!"

"One can't help laughing at it, of course," said Flora, "seen from our point of view it *is* ridiculous; but think of the pig!" and she laughed again; "*he* wouldn't see anything laughable in it, you know, quite the reverse!"

"Ah!" said Lieutenant Marston, "never thought of that! I'm under the impression, too, that that kind of animal *can't* laugh—though I have heard of a laughing hyena, by the bye, and that's something like a pig."

"You are perfectly right, Miss Bellairs," interposed the Major, "the pig does *not* laugh, wouldn't if he could; though he has not confided his private ideas to me, the signs are so strong, that I feel justified in saying that Popham's attentions are not thrown away; on the contrary, the sentiment is reciprocal, variously but vividly expressed—on the one side by rubbing with a stick—on the other by an eager rush of welcome and appropriate grunts."

"Weally now, you're *too* pathetic," said Lieutenant Marston. "I feel that if you

go on I must weep!—*cwy* isn't stwong enough."

"Bosh!" said Captain Johnstone. "Better scratch a pig than stick it. He's the best fellow out."

"By Jupiter Tonans and all the other gods! Mums, what's happened?" said Major Delisle. "Never did I hear such a flow of eloquence from your lips! Whence comes it?"

"A fair field!" said Captain Johnstone.

A dark flush rose in the Major's face.

"Captain Johnstone," he began—

"O come now, Delisle," interrupted Lieutenant Marston, and Johnstone too—*all's* fair in love and war, and we are *all* the best fellows out. That's a point on which everyone is agreed, you know, Miss Bellairs," he continued, addressing himself to her; "I should be awfully cut up if we gave you a different opinion; happily it is impossible. You are just—*we* are perfect. The conclusion is inevitable."

"Of all the cool fellows!" said Major Delisle as a general laugh greeted this sally.

"Ah! well! Weally I don't know," replied the Lieutenant, putting on the affected style of

speech, as was his occasional habit, "you othaw fellahs think it if you don't—aw—say it! so that—aw—I don't quite see—aw—my advantages!"

"Oh! you are fully appreciated, I assure you, Lieutenant Marston," said Flora. "How can it be otherwise when such brilliant luminaries condescend to shine on us simple country folk. But I've not the least idea what you are all talking about. Fair fields, and love and war seem to me to have nothing whatever to do with the place, the time, or the question. I'll tell you what *I* have been thinking; it's a new idea on the pig subject, and I flatter myself a brilliant one."

"O Lord! that unlucky pig turned up again!" cried Charley, without thought. "Will he never be consigned to oblivion, his proper home?" Then, recollecting himself suddenly, he added: "A thousand pardons, Miss Bellairs! It would of course be happiness to listen for ever to your ideas on any subject, but you see the only thing that struck me was that wretched beast, and he's been thrown at my head so very often that I think I *may* plead extenuating circumstances. Pray

forgive me, and enlighten us. As you are strong, be merciful; we hang upon your words."

"You don't appeal to my justice, then, this time?" said Flora.

He shook his head sadly. "Alas no! the mighty are fallen!"

"Well, as you throw yourself entirely on my generosity, you are pardoned—especially as the favour seems likely to be regarded as a punishment."

"O, no, no! ten thousand times no!" said Charley.

"Here, then, is my poor little idea, which, having narrowly escaped strangulation, struggles into life under the crushing weight of a long preface; with all the *disadvantages*, in fact. I was thinking first that if that queer old doctrine of the transmigration of souls were by any chance to turn out true, Sir Frederick Popham would have great prospects in the next life; and then it occurred to me that, looking only at the present, if I *had* to be a pig—"

"O, Miss Bellairs!" cried Charley; and—

"What a howwid idea!" added Lieutenant Marston.

"Please not to call my ideas horrid!" said Flora.

"I beg your pardon!" replied the unabashed Lieutenant; "but weally—you know, Miss Bellairs, the idea of *you*—and—a pig—in juxtaposition—it's too much!"

"If you *could* be quiet, Marston," said Major Delisle, "we might get to know what Miss Bellairs means."

"I mean," said Flora, "that if I *had* to be a pig"—groans from the Lieutenant—"I should ask no higher boon of fate than to be bestowed on Sir Frederick Popham."

"Ah!" said the Lieutenant, "a new face to an old friend! The pig's side of the question!"

"Why, yes," said the Major, who didn't at all approve this new view, "no doubt *as* a pig Popham would fulfil all one's desires; be an object of reverence, in fact."

At this opportune moment Sir Frederick Popham and Isabel came up to them. Flora looked up at him. Surely he was the most

exquisite of exquisites! The picture of him and the pig painted for her by Major Delisle was before her eyes, and, in spite of herself, she laughed.

"We've been telling Miss Bellairs 'Pop and the Pig,' " said Charley, explanatorily.

"Weally, now, you fellahs! you're too bad!" said Sir Frederick. "You see, Miss Bellairs," he continued, apologetically, "I know, of course, it's widiculous, you know; but he expects me, pooaw fellah! and he can't do himself, not pwopewly!"

And then he stopped, and took refuge in pulling his long whiskers, and looked exceedingly helpless, and, as he often said of himself, "not a clewaw fellah;"—not by any means.

Flora pitied him; besides, she had been looking out for a chance; here it was, and she seized it. She ceased laughing, and said, with a sweet smile,—

"Do you know, Sir Frederick, I came to the conclusion that he was a very lucky animal to have fallen into your hands."

"No, did you though? How good of you!"

said Sir Frederick, who had given Isabel a seat, and who now came up to Flora.

“Do you like dawgs?” was his next remark. “I’ve such a splendid little tewwiaw! He can do anything! You must let me show him to you.”

Flora *did* like dogs, immensely. And while she was expressing her ideas on the subject Sir Frederick was looking at her eyes and her hair, and rapidly coming to the conclusion, that she was charming. His next remark was for the purpose of asking her to dance, an invitation she accepted forthwith, to the discomfiture of all and sundry by whom she was surrounded. They “Pish’d” and “Pshaw’d,” and laughed at their own blank faces, then sought other partners, and forgot the whole; all but Major Delisle, who sat some minutes musing on the strange caprices of fortune, in anything but an amiable state of mind. Like many another schemer who has outreached himself, he repented, not of his work, but its results. “But who could have dreamed she would have taken it like that?” was the final reflection with which he consoled himself before he, too,

mingled with the crowd, to take his revenge on a more susceptible subject. For winning hearts was his favourite game. He longed for them, schemed for them, gained them,—and threw them away!

CHAPTER V.

THE repast was over; dinner we cannot call it, nor supper, nor any other definite meal; but whatever it was, it was over; and Mr. Warfield, who had, as far as in him lay, been all things to all men—and especially to all women—had now got his reward. He had passed some very wretched moments amid his success, from the pangs of jealousy, to him an entirely new sensation.

“Why did they follow her so?” he thought, as he watched her. “What did they mean by dancing with her? And that double idiot, Sir Frederick, what could *he* want with her; she was not for him! No, she is mine, mine,” he said, once, half aloud, in his exasperation, “she is mine, and I will have her.”

And he had worked his will. He was walking with her by the brook, leaving behind

the sight and sound of all those obnoxious individuals who had intruded on his self-created rights. Fainter and fainter grew the hum of voices; rarer the floating echoes of merry laughter. He was alone with his love—only he and she in all the world—under the summer sky, whence the burning heat had passed, leaving all things fresh, and fair, and cool.

He walked beside her, silent, not daring to say what was in him; and with a heart too full for all other speech.

Isabel grew timid, and said,

“Let us turn back, now, Mr. Warfield; it is very pleasant, but I must not keep you—you, who are so much wanted.”

“Don’t go,” he answered, “let me show you a spot I know you will like; I thought of it when first I saw you; it is like you. I have been waiting and watching for this time through all the weary work and worry. I *have* done my work, thoroughly, I assure you; do not take away my reward?”

She had paused, and now, for all answer, went on again, and he beside her; and there

was a flush on the delicate face, and the eyes sought the ground.

The deep, tender voice had power over her, and sent a new thrill, a faint suggestion of impossible, incomprehensible hopes and joys, through all her being; and she walked on in silence, dreaming; not shy, not afraid; in a sweet, delicious dream.

Her eyes were bent upon the ground; his eyes rested on her, and read, greedily, the pure, sweet face; till he longed, with a great longing, to take it and press it to his breast—but refrained as yet.

So they walked on, side by side, in silence. A strange walk; to be remembered again and again, for evermore. In distant days, they would feel the evening air, hear the running water, inhale the perfume of the roses, see the very birds that had crossed their path; all the thousand things, which now they hardly noticed, would then come back to them in strong reality; but now they walked on in vague unconsciousness; drinking a sweetness that made all other sweetness tame, full only of themselves and of each other. On, by the

rippling brook, under the fresh, living green of the thick trees, through whose masses peeped on them, now and again, the deep blue sky; softly, tenderly, like the eye of one who loved them; but all unseen by them. On, still, till the path dipped suddenly down, and they saw what they had come to see, and partially awoke—a strange, unreal waking, such as comes in dreams.

And the little dell below them; surely it had dropped from dream-land, and lay there in its beauty to carry on the dream. It was a deep, circular hollow, entirely covered—carpeted—with mingled masses of golden gorse, delicate blue harebells, and the white blossomed sloe; and down one side plashed the merry brook in a sparkling cascade, feeding, on its playful way, the ferns and mosses that encrusted the rough, grey stones lying along its sides.

They stood and looked down into it, and Isabel sighed, and said, in a hushed voice,

“How very lovely—*too* lovely! it seems as if we earthly creatures had no right here. I could fancy that a fairy, sheathed in green,

would flash from the sparkling water, and wave us back with an enchanted wand."

"I had a fancy, too," answered Mr. Warfield, "not quite the same, but very like. I, too, thought it the very place for a fairy; but mine did not spring from the cold waters, she came to me with tripping feet, among sunshine and flowers, and instead of waving me back, beckoned me on with sweet enticement, and brought me here to her own place."

"Mr. Warfield," said Isabel, while the vivid blush again shone in her cheeks, "do not talk so strangely. You, who know so much, who are so wise and strong, do not mock me, an ignorant girl, with flattering words you *cannot* mean; it is not generous."

"Mock you!" he cried, passionately, "do men mock at heaven?"

She trembled, and answered not, but stood still by his side, looking into the dell, so fair and lovely!—her own place, he said. A vague unrest was in her heart,—a strange, unreal remembrance of having been there before in some long-lost, shadowy existence; she seemed even to know again the wandering breath of the wind, heavy with summer-evening odours,

which, as it gently stirred the branches of the trees, caressed, too, these enchanted mortals, and wooed them softly into the new life whose borders their feet had already crossed.

He stood strong and firm; his purpose clear, his way defined, the end within his grasp. No memories nor fancies crossed his brain, no doubts nor fears, nothing unreal,—unless, perhaps, the golden hopes that smiled up at him from the flowers. The power of his glance was stronger than her will, and she raised her eyes and looked into his face—and feared. For all the love that dwelt there, it expressed so strong a will, that she felt crushed and helpless, and she feared and turned away.

“Let me go back, please,” she said; “I would rather.”

Then all the sternness melted out of the dark face above her, and left only tenderness; and it was a voice of eager, low entreaty that besought her.

“Don’t say so, Miss Upton, *pray* don’t; it hurts me. Surely I am not a monster in your eyes?—though sadly old and grave, I know, beside your youth. Is it so?” he continued, and a sharp pain sounded in his voice; “have

you tired so soon of me and nature? Do you want to be back amongst the crowd?"

"O, no, indeed! pray don't think that!" cried Isabel, astonished and distressed, "I like being here, and I like being with you, but—" and she paused in confusion, not knowing how to express herself—not, indeed, knowing precisely what she wanted to express.

"You like it?" he said eagerly, "then why go? Come down a little to a seat there is by the waterfall, and let us rest awhile, away from all that noise and din." He moved down a step or two, and held out his hand. "Give me your hand, and I will help you over the stones."

She would fain have refused, but she could not. He commanded and she obeyed. He took the little hand and held it fast, with a light, firm touch that was hardly pressure, and yet made itself felt in every fibre; he held it fast and looked up at her as he stood below and guided her feet over the rough, broken ground, and his soul was stirred within him, and his pulses beat strangely fast; at that minute he would have given all his chances of fame and power, all his ambition—for a kiss upon a girl's hand! But again he refrained. He must not

frighten the timid bird fluttering round the bars of his cage; no, he must be very still, and gentle, and quiet, and tempt her within by every sweet promise, and let no fear come near her, or she might escape. He must wait, wait steadily, till she was safe within, and the door well closed; and then—ah! then—when she was all his own—he would teach her to joy and not to tremble at the deepest tones of the master's voice—at the touch of his burning kisses!

So he thought as he released her hand, and threw himself on the ground at her feet, while she sat on the little rustic bench; and the water murmured on, making music for them—them only; and the flowers bloomed—for them; and the trees rustled and waved their graceful limbs—for them; and the sky shone over them—them only.

“Do you know,” he said, looking up at her, “I believe you were right. I believe the fairy *has* flashed out of the sparkling water and is sitting throned there above me; she wears white and green, the fairy's sheen,—but she won't wave me away, I'm sure; she's far too

beneficent a fairy to grudge a wee mite of her domain to a firm believer and humble slave."

Isabel was, by this time, getting a little used to homage—it is a habit easily acquired—and learning to accept it.

"Well," she said, playfully, "if the fairy is to be a fairy, she ought to have what she wants." While speaking, she broke a little branch of sloe growing by her side, and, waving it in the air, cried, with mock solemnity, "Slave of the wand, bring flowers!—harebells, gorse and sloe!—blue, yellow, and white!—bring all!"

"Fair sprite, to hear is to obey!" said he, as he rushed upon the flowers, and tore them up by handfuls, until the fairy forgot her character in her consternation, and begged instead of ordering.

"O, please not so many!—it's cruel! and you will spoil my domain, too!" she continued, recovering herself, as he ceased his ravages. "I see fairies ought to reign alone, and do their own behests; these mortals are far too savage. Look only at the number of lovely, broken, wasted things you have seized; instead of getting me just a few, carefully and tenderly."

"If the world were filled with flowers, I would get them all to lay them at your feet," he said, as he brought them to her. "Would they were pearls! Diamonds are all too bright. But all fair, gentle, precious things I'd get, and bring them here to you."

"Give me your flowers for mine," he added, after a pause; "Nay," as she hesitated, "fairies are all queens, and should give royal gifts;—give me the only flowers I prize in all the world!"

As she held them towards him timidly, a flash of brilliant joy lit up his dark eyes; he took them from her hand reverently, and kissed them like a relic,—were they not a sign? The precious first-fruits of all that should come after.

He kissed his flowers with lips unused to kiss, that had lost the art for long; that had known no touch of kindred lips since his mother's stiffened in a last caress when he was a baby; he kissed his flowers, then held them in a loving clasp, and looked up again from his place on the ground at Isabel.

She still sat there in outward calm, but with a strange flutter at the heart that showed itself

in vivid colour on her cheeks, tenderly arranging the gathered flowers, and sacrificing, with a sigh, the crushed and broken, as though they were creatures that could feel.

He liked his place upon the ground, he liked the picture before his eyes, he liked the sights, and sounds and scents,—all the fair present was congenial to him. As he lay there in happy silence he was, for perhaps the first time in his life, content, utterly content;—a state that does not last. The thought of time came to him, and with a sigh he spoke. So fair, so sweet, so precious was the fleeting present, he hardly liked to break it for *any* future. But there was a deeper shadow on the flowers; a colder, paler blue, in the sky; the shades of evening would be on them soon. So he spoke, but as he spoke he sighed.

“Mine is a sad, weary life, Miss Upton,” he said; without hope or object: lonely—*very* lonely.”

She raised her eyes from the flowers, and looked at him in mute, wondering pity.

“You know what that means, I see,” he went on,—“*lonely*: what can be worse? Would you like a dog you cared for to lead the life I

do? To have no eye to brighten when he comes, no voice to greet him after *any* effort, and say, 'Well done!' You would not? No; you are all love and gentleness. Then take my life, and do with it what you will: make it all one joy. Give me for sorrow, gladness; for darkness, light;—for you can! Isabel, *don't* shrink, *don't* turn away; *only* let me love you. I do not ask your love—not yet—you will give it me in time—seeing how much I want it. Say I may love you, *Isabel?*”

And he lingered on the name with tender love. Never before had such a sound greeted Isabel's ears, never such sweetness entered into her heart.

“If—if you *can!*” she answered. “But you don't know, Mr. Warfield; you are mistaken;—there is nothing in me to love. I am not clever, nor pretty, nor *any* thing;—mamma says so;—and afterwards you would find out and be sorry; and that would be dreadful. O, please say no more about it! You have only seen me to-day, and you don't know me!”

“Not know you! Isabel, my darling! for you *will* be mine. I know there is none like you—*none*. I ask no higher gift of heaven

than your love. Such as you are, come to me, my love—my love; and make your home in my heart.”

And he rose, and opened his arms, and held them to her entreatingly; but it was too soon, too sudden. She turned pale and drew back.

“O, Mr. Warfield! please, don’t!” she said; “you are very kind, very good; but please, don’t.”

“Forgive me,” he said; “forgive me! I am too rash;” and he sank down again at her feet. “But I may love you, Isabel; you know you have said yes to that. And the day will come when you can say to me, ‘Gerald, I love you!’ Ah! happy day! You won’t shrink from me, *then*! And it will come. I love you so, that my great love must bring it.”

She looked down at him, there at her feet; strong, handsome, powerful: *very* handsome, as he lay there with the love-light in his eyes, and hope and trust in his heart. Rich, she knew he was, and talented; courted by men and women: and she looked at him and wondered. What miracle had brought him there to *her*? A young, weak girl; a child, her mother said; not pretty, as she also said, and as Isabel ho-

nestly believed. Surely it must be some strange, wild dream; and the music, and flowers and dances—all a dream; and presently she should wake and find herself in her little bed at home. For how *could* it be true? And she passed her hand across her eyes with a bewildered air.

“Does the light hurt you, Isabel?” he said. He would not miss a chance of uttering the dear name, the name of his beloved, the sweetest sound in all the world.

“O no!” she said; “how could it, only I—”

“Well?”

“I felt as if I was dreaming, and wanted to see if it was real—if I was awake.”

“Why? Was it a pleasant dream, Isabel?”

“Yes,” she said; “it seemed too pleasant to be true. All the beautiful day, and the dancing; and then that you should think me worth caring about! That seems the strangest of all!”

He laughed; and the sound of the laugh surprised himself: it was clear, bright, genial. Her unconsciousness and simplicity were so great a charm to him, he hardly regretted the absence of the love he wanted, and which would

have given him so different an answer—that he knew well; but of course it was unnatural, impossible that she should have it yet. She sat there before him, and spoke like a child, as she was; *his* the task to teach her to be a woman.

So he thought; and laughed brightly as he lay looking up at her, and said,

“Strange as it is, it’s true, though. Real fact! A truth to last for life! So you really think it strange? Don’t you know at all what a pretty picture I am looking at now? *No* idea of an angel face, and sweet brown eyes, and a mouth that smiles,—all framed in masses of rolling brown hair? Is it really quite strange to you, this picture?”

The deep colour rushed over neck and face, as she replied:

“I never thought I was pretty, Mr. Warfield; no one ever did but Flora and Pearson, because they loved me; and perhaps that is the reason”—She paused.

“Go on, Isabel.”

“No,” she said, recovering herself, and laughing, “you know quite well what I mean ;

I have said enough. But I *do* think you are mistaken. What you say doesn't sound at all like me."

"And *you* are mistaken, Miss Fairy," he responded, "which a fairy ought not to be, in thinking that picture is beautiful to me, *only* because I love you. I am glad to see, though, how entirely you have admitted that fact; you will never rub your eyes again to see whether it is real or not, eh?"

"I don't know," she answered; "I think it very likely I *may*. When I am at home again, all the day will be like a dream; and it will seem as if it *couldn't* be true."

"Then I shall have to tell it you all over again when I come. Really, Miss Upton, it appears to me that you are going to give me a great deal of work."

"O, pray don't come only to see me!" she said. "I know you have all kinds of things to do—really important things. I could never think you would waste your time on me!"

"Child!" he answered, "you don't know what you are saying. If all the important things, election and all, were on one side, and

you on the other, I should throw the important things all to the winds, to do with them as suited their good pleasure! And *I* should come to you. But there is no need of any choice in the matter. The important things will get infinitely better done with the thought of your sweet presence to look forward to. It will be strong wine to me; I shall do the work of two men. Would you like me to win. Isabel?"

"I don't know," she answered; "I never thought—if you wish it, I should."

"You shall tell me another tale by the time I am member for the Riding! Not care whether your own true knight wins or not! Why, it is downright treason!"

"Well, if you want to win, I am sure we ought to go back; it is worse than treason to you to stay away so long. And, O, dear! I promised Harry to dance with him, and I forgot it! What will he say? Do let us go. I never forgot him before!"

"O, never fear! Sir Harry Upton will not lack partners nor amusement; he will be well able to dispense with his sister."

"Oh! I am sure he will miss me—I must go!" And she got up, and turned resolutely to go up the little hill.

"Well, if my fairy *will* go," he said, "I must need go, too. But why must such moments end? I could stay here, thus, for ever!"

He was filled with a great longing. Something of hers his lips must touch, and yet he feared, so they fell upon the trailing dress, and kissed it passionately, trying to still their craving hunger with that which was not bread; then he sprang up, and before her, and again held the little hand while he helped her up the hill; and she, all unconscious, said, laughingly,—

"Wouldn't it be rather damp soon? And think of the winter snows! The fairy would never live through them, you know; they would fall on her softly, softly; and when the spring came, she would have melted back into her element, her home,—the waterfall."

"You are a dreadfully matter-of-fact little fairy," he said. "But, perhaps, it is as well now we have left Fairyland to come back to the ways of the world we live in. When may I come to see Lady Upton? To-morrow?"

He had made rapid progress, this new wooer.

Within the hour he had walked along the path, not venturing on words of love; and now he walked by her side, acknowledged, permitted. As he spoke he thought of it, and smiled.

"Mamma will be glad to see you, I am sure," said Isabel in reply; "but you won't say anything about me? *Please* don't."

"My child, why not?" he answered. "That is the very thing I should come for!"

"But, *indeed*, you must not! Say you won't, please! Mamma will be so very angry! She wouldn't have let me come at all, because she said I was too young, only Harry said he wouldn't come without me; and if you were to say that—that you cared about me!—O, what shall I do! I wish I had not come!"

"Isabel! dear Isabel! don't be afraid," he said. "I would not grieve or hurt you for the world. But you see I *must* speak to Lady Upton; and I don't think she will be angry at all. Don't look so frightened, love, *don't*; it is pitiful. I am *sure* she won't be angry."

"Are you really?" she answered: "Ah! but you don't know!"

“And *you* don’t know, mistaken sprite,” he said : “ You have lived too much in Fairyland to be acquainted with the doings of this every-day world. Be it known to you, that I have houses and lands galore; and that there is not a mamma in my grounds to-day, from the dowager Duchess downwards, who would be in the least degree angry to see me as a suitor for her daughter’s hand. No need to be afraid of mamma, darling ! *You* are the only tyrant I have to fear; and this precious pledge” —and he again pressed the flowers to his lips —“will drive out fear, and leave me only hope.”

“O give me back my flowers, Mr. Warfield !” she said : “Mamma will ask me what I have done with them; I never thought of that ! *Please* give them to me !”

And she stopped and looked up at him with eager, entreating eyes; holding out a hand that trembled.

He looked at her tenderly, sorrowfully; with something of surprise.

“Poor child !” he said. “Poor little, timid thing ! It is strange. So gentle, sweet and fair ! How can it be ?”

He took her hand and held it close, and continued,

“Isabel, trust me! If your mother asks for your flowers, tell her you gave them to me, and that I am coming to see her to-morrow. She will not be angry. Don’t tremble, love! or I *must* give them to you; and I want to keep them so very, *very* much. Trust me, dear, and let me have them!”

“You know better than I, perhaps,” she said, withdrawing her hand and walking on again, “and if you are *quite* sure, keep them; but oh! *please* put them somewhere out of sight before we go to mamma; I couldn’t *bear* to see her look at me.”

“My darling!” he answered: “if you will only come to me, I will take you soon, and you shall fear no one. I would carry your flowers proudly before all the world, but as you are afraid, we will keep in the shrubbery till we reach the house, and I can take them in through the library window, and no one will see them. *Now*, may I keep them?”

“O indeed! I like you to have them,” she replied: “don’t think me ungrateful—it is only mamma.”

"Never say grateful or ungrateful to me again, Isabel!" he said. "I am yours; all that I have is yours; there is no room for gratitude from you to me."

"Ah! but I shall feel it, if I may not say it," she answered. "You are so good, so kind, I must be—"

"Isabel!" he said.

"Well! if I must not say that, I will say something! If I may not be grateful, I may—care for you."

"My darling! it is more than I could have hoped. Care will soon be—love. Wait here one minute while I find some water for my flowers, and then we will go back to all the world—you will keep mine?"

She clasped them a little closer, and said, "yes."

CHAPTER VI.

As Mr. Warfield and Isabel, leaving behind them that precious hour to be a memory for ever, emerged from the shrubbery and mingled with the party on the lawn, many eyes fell on them, and significant smiles passed from lip to lip. They had both been missed, both been sought, and now re-appeared together. It was marked, very, and the inference was plain; yet it seemed hardly possible that so mere a child should have won at once so great a prize. So they thought, as they looked at her, some of those anxious, hard-working girls, whose only hope in life was matrimony; and yet they sighed with the conviction that the new chance had already slipped away. The raw recruit, who had neither watched nor toiled had borne off the spoil; while they, the veteran survivors of many a well-fought field, were nowhere.

It *was* hard ; none the less hard that they were used to it. If you had seen a young, newly-joined soldier rush in before you, and storm the battery, and wave the enemy's flag in triumph above his head, while you were yet on the far side of the trench ; if you had seen this ninety times and nine, do you think you would like it better the hundredth ? Neither did they.

Sir Harry, who was looking for his sister, spied her and Mr. Warfield from the far-end of the lawn, and made his way to them ; fuming inwardly under the shower of smiles and little passing words that impeded his progress.

"Isabel !" he cried, when at last he reached them,—"*where have* you been ? I've been hunting for you in every conceivable place, and so has Sir Frederick Popham, and Dobree, and heaps of fellows. I've been bored to death about you. It's *too* bad. Upon my soul it is."

"Oh ! don't let the heaps of fellows trouble you, Sir Harry," said Mr. Warfield, inwardly rejoicing at their discomfiture, and congratulating himself on having carried her off to so safe a place. "They are easily consoled. Anything that can dance will do for *them*. And

Miss Upton has been resting. She needed it; and I have taken the greatest possible care of her."

Sir Harry gave him a quick look of suspicion and dislike. What business had *he* to take care of her?

"O! I didn't suppose a wild beast would eat her, or anything of that sort," he said; "but it's a nuisance to be so pestered." "What's the matter with you Izzy?" he continued. "Why can't you speak and tell me where you have been?"

It was Mr. Warfield's turn to feel antagonistic. This tone to Isabel—*his* Isabel!

"Really, Sir Harry,—Miss Upton having been with me"—he began haughtily, when he was stopped by a pressure of the hand that lay on his arm—an unmistakeable pressure. The joy of it, the feeling that he had so far gained her that she appealed to him, and relied on him, thrilled through him. He pressed the hand gently against his side, and stood there, smiling, while Isabel spoke.

"I had no idea we should be away so long, Harry," she said, "or I should have told you before I went. Mr. Warfield took me to look

at a lovely dell the brook runs through, and it was farther than I thought, and then—then we stayed there; and I sat on a seat there was, and Mr. Warfield got me some flowers—such lovely flowers—look!” And she held them towards him.

But he would not be mollified, and instead of bending towards them, held his head rather higher than before. The *we* in this sentence did not please him.

“And you forgot all about me, I suppose?” he said; “and the dance I’d had to wait such a time for?”

“O, no I didn’t,” she answered, eagerly,—“at least not long; it was my remembering it that made us come away.”

The “we” that had not pleased Sir Harry *had* pleased Mr. Warfield; the *us* pleased him still more, and he tried to soothe the chafed boy, for his sister’s sake.

“Indeed, Sir Harry,” he said, “you have no cause to think yourself neglected. I entreated Miss Upton to stay longer, but she wouldn’t listen to me—would come away lest her brother should want her—and I had to submit. Greatly against my will, I assure you.”

"Will you dance with me now, Harry? Do," said Isabel.

"I can't," he replied; "I'm engaged all through; there isn't another chance. After all the bother I had to get you here! And I *did* so want a dance with you, Izzy! It's *too* bad."

"And *I* wanted to dance with you, Harry," she answered. "Don't be unkind. I'm very sorry; but, indeed, I did not know it was so long. Try to manage it, won't you?"

"I can't, I tell you!" he said, savagely. "And as for wanting, if you had wanted much you wouldn't have gone off with a stranger just when the time came! But it's like a girl! And *then* they talk of being unkind!"

At the word stranger Mr. Warfield pressed the hand to his side again, and smiled. Sir Harry could not see the pressure, but he saw the smile, and that was enough. It implied ownership and understanding and protection, and hosts of other things, which were highly exasperating to one who considered Isabel his peculiar property.

"Would you mind letting me have my sister, Mr. Warfield?" he said, in an imperious tone, "*if* you can spare her?"

“ Ah! that’s just what I *can’t* do, Sir Harry,” answered Mr. Warfield, quietly, still smiling; “and I *should* mind, very much, giving her up. I must take her back to Lady Upton, as in duty bound.”

Sir Harry looked very fierce indeed, as he said, “ Do you mean that *I* am not fit to take care of her?”

“ Not the least in the world, my dear boy,” replied Mr. Warfield. “ How could I? when, as you justly observed, there are no beasts of prey about,—particularly here.” And he glanced round on the smiling, well-dressed throng, and laughed; the idea seemed so strangely absurd and incongruous! “ But you see Lady Upton gave her in charge to me,” he continued, “and you said you were engaged for this dance, too;—see, they are beginning.” “ Come, Sir Harry,” he added, after a pause, during which Sir Harry stood scowling at the ground. “ Don’t grudge me the end of my little walk. *I* can’t have even *one* dance, you know, not with anybody! Think of that! and pity me!”

But Sir Harry would not be pacified. He turned abruptly away, leaving Mr. Warfield

master of the field, it is true, but in no way satisfied, and muttering as he went, "I'm not so sure that there *are* no beasts of prey about?" And his partner found him by no means the bright, pleasant young gentleman she had known a couple of hours before, for, being out of humour, and not accustomed to control his humours, he followed the course of his thoughts, and scarcely spoke to her. "To think that Isabel should have treated him like that! Go off with a fellow she never saw before in her life, old enough to be her father, too! and forget all about *him*, Harry, and stick to the other fellow, even when he was there, and wanted her to come away! Was ever devoted brother so ill-used?" *He* thought not. And his partner suffered accordingly.

"Rather queer-tempered, that brother of yours, is he not?" said Mr. Warfield to Isabel, as they went on their way, after Sir Harry's departure.

"O, he's a dear fellow!" she answered, "and he loves me so much! You must not think anything of what he said just now. You see he is put out at losing the dance; and it *was* very careless of me. I never forgot him before.

O, you must like Harry, Mr. Warfield! He's so good to me. If it had not been for him, mamma would not have let me come to-day."

"Then I cannot choose but like him," he replied. "Whatever he may do or say in future, I am his debtor for evermore. Ah! there is Lady Upton, under that tree; I fear I really must take you to her now—till to-morrow, my darling!"—and he rested his eyes upon hers for an instant, before they reached Lady Upton.

Her greeting was an echo of Sir Harry's.

"Where *have* you been, Isabel?" she said, "It is an hour since you left me—more; and you have been sought for everywhere. It is most extraordinary."

"Don't blame Miss Upton, pray," said Mr. Warfield. "You delivered her into my charge, you know, and *I* am the only sinner—if sin there be. I begged her to go with me, and I led her on as far as the waterfall; but not without many protests and desires to come back."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure, Mr. Warfield," answered her ladyship, "to take notice of such a child and try to amuse her, but," and she addressed herself to her daughter, "you ought

to have known better, Isabel, and not let Mr. Warfield sacrifice himself to the indulgence of your whims. You must have known it could be no pleasure to him, and you should not be so selfish."

"Selfishness! Sacrifice!" exclaimed Mr. Warfield; "Lady Upton, excuse me. I begged it as a favour, and had to beg very hard, too, I assure you. Miss Upton is guiltless, it is I whom you must scold. I have trespassed on your kindness; the culprit confesses! let your mercy make the penance light."

"Indeed, I think the sin has itself been penance enough," replied her ladyship, graciously, "you are absolved. To be kept a whole hour with a child, when such important interests required you here! Notwithstanding your kind excuses, I cannot but think it was very thoughtless on Isabel's part; I only wonder your patience lasted so long. Leave her now with me; don't let us waste more of your valuable time, I am sufficiently ashamed already. Besides, I am *very* blue, you know, and want you to succeed."

Isabel, who had stood in silence by Mr. Warfield, now took the seat by her mother. Still

he lingered. He wanted some one to come and rescue his dove; he could not leave it there alone in the hawk's nest. That was his exact idea. So he lingered.

"May I ask your opinion of my chances, Lady Upton?" he said.

"Excellent," was the reply. "I don't see what chance that cotton-spinning man *can* have; we never had anything but a gentleman for the Riding yet."

"Ah! but the times are changing," he said; "we are all going to be Liberals, Democrats; what do I know? perhaps even happy republicans, one of these days."

"Not while I live," answered her ladyship, sternly and solemnly.

She looked up at Mr. Warfield and saw that his eyes rested on Isabel; following their gaze, she perceived with surprise that she looked very lovely. It was a revelation to her. Could he possibly admire her? Pshaw! she was too young, and so very childish. Still, she looked at her curiously, and, scanning her critically from head to foot, her eyes fell on the flowers.

"Isabel, you ridiculous child!" she said, "actually to have loaded and disfigured your-

self with mere wild rubbish in a scene like this ! It is out of all keeping. How very tiresome you are ! What has become of your bouquet ? ”

The colour deepened in Isabel’s cheeks. She was about to answer, with downcast eyes, when Mr. Warfield spoke for her.

“ It is mine, by deed of gift, Lady Upton,” he said.

“ Yours ! ” said her ladyship amazed. “ Why, Mr. Warfield, what could *you* want with flowers ? I suppose you found this absurd girl wanted those wild things, and took the others out of her way. Really, you are *too* good-natured.” And she looked seriously annoyed, for, after all, Isabel was *her* daughter, and what would Mr. Warfield think of her ?

“ Not at all,” he said. “ There was a flower I wanted very much, though all unused to loving flowers, as you suppose ; but this flower I longed for, and I begged so hard, that in mere charity Miss Upton could not refuse me.”

Isabel gave him a quick glance of comprehension and thanks ; and he flashed back a look of tenderness and power that made her feel safe even by her mother’s side. Eyes can say so much ! Quicker, stronger, keener than words ;

what joys and agonies, what hopes and fears, what prayers and curses do they not express in one swift, lightning glance!

Sir Frederick Popham came to claim Isabel for the dance, and Mr. Warfield, forgetting his animosity, received him as a deliverer who would shelter his dove at least for a time, and actually smiled upon him, whiskers and all! A new instance of the truth of the old, old maxim, written wearily such thousands of times by weary children on their up-hill road to polite writing,—“Circumstances alter cases!”

Isabel went with him, nothing loth; but lo! the charm was gone! The dance was not quite so delightful, and she found the exquisite baronet slightly insipid. Poor child! She had tasted too soon of a cup which takes the flavour out of all others, and before the end of her first party she grew a little tired—tired of the people individually, and the crowd collectively; tired, too, of the low flattery erewhile so very pleasant; trite and tame now, coming after the deep tones of a voice that had breathed love-worship in her ears; whose sound was in them still. Too soon; ah! *much* too soon! Life was rushing down upon her swift, and strong

and stern, though wearing so fair a mask; and she, young, weak, fearful—how could she hold her own in such a fight?

Parties, however brilliant and successful, must, like all other earthly things, come to an end; and to this fatal end Mr. Warfield's was rapidly approaching: but never was decay more lavishly covered by flowers! Wherever he went he was greeted by smiles and thanks; all the opinions were golden.

Colonel Fitzgerald sought him out.

"Found at last!" he said; "I have had a regular hunt for you, but really I couldn't leave without congratulating you. This out-door affair of yours is quite a happy idea,—you will certainly carry the ladies' votes; and upon my soul! I think if I *had* been in the darkness of Liberalism, you would have brought me to reason! To my mind, it is a striking proof of sound views to receive you in a scene like this, in fresh air and among flowers, instead of cooping you up in a close dining room at Midsummer."

"I am very happy to have your approbation, Colonel," said Mr. Warfield; "it is the more gratifying, as I know the sacrifice you make in

coming amongst us at all. But I fear I can't claim much merit for the realization of my happy idea. If the rain had come down upon us, it would have appeared anything but happy—in fact decidedly limp! I am almost ashamed to ask you, after what you have just said; but we must have some dinners: all the world won't be content with fresh air and flowers. Will you come and help me to win, for the sake of the good cause?"

"I am always ready to fight for the old colours," he answered; "and he would be a churl indeed who would not do his best for a man like you. Count upon me. We all owe *you* gratitude: there can be no question of thanks to *us*. Such men are not to be found every day; and the least we can do is to fight for them, and serve them loyally, when we have got them."

"A thousand thanks, Colonel," said Mr. Warfield; "you overwhelm me. With such supporters the result is safe. We run to win, you know, and don't mind the pace: it's not a *waiting* race." And he laughed.

The Colonel laughed, too. "All right," he said; "that is the good old style. What utter

bosh this row about bribery and corruption is! What are money and influence for, I should like to know, if not to act on the lower classes, and sway them for their good? What better thing can a man do with them? It's bosh, utter and complete *bosh!*"

"So it is, Colonel," replied Mr. Warfield; "*we* know better." And they laughed again, as they said good bye; and the Colonel went on his way, still chuckling internally at the thought of the intense stupidity of the benighted creatures who objected to the useful employment of natural means, legitimate influences;—which was *his* idea of the system popularly known as bribery and corruption! And as he was the very soul of honour one would suppose he must have been right.

Mr. Warfield, too, went on his way; but only to be stopped immediately by Lady Powerscourt, the charming mother of three charming daughters, never likely, alas! to be *more* charming, who stood grouped beside her.

"How clever of you, you dear Mr. Warfield," said she, "to give us such a charming afternoon; we must all follow your lead, really; it's delicious! So rural and picturesque."

"O dear, yes; enchanting!" chorussed the three other charmers, who had made decided progress in three separate flirtations; one of which looked serious.

So it went on. From old men and dowagers, from young men and maidens, variations on this same theme greeted Mr. Warfield's ears; and, what *is* surprising, were repeated to other ears as well.

The Midsummer night was dropping gently on the earth when Lady Upton went to her carriage, escorted by Mr. Warfield. As they went he asked if he might call on her the next morning. She, gratified by the marked honour he had shown her throughout, and ignorant of its cause, received the proposition most graciously.

"I shall be glad indeed, to see you, Mr. Warfield," she said, "but your time is so precious; and my influence is most heartily at your service. Do you not think it would be better to devote it to some one else?"

"You are very kind," he answered, "to think so of my interests; but however precious my time may be it could not possibly be better

bestowed. With your ladyship's permission I shall certainly come."

"Pray do," she replied; "it was only on account of your time, otherwise I shall be delighted. And you really must let me thank you for the very pleasant afternoon we have had. It has been quite unique. A great success."

"For which," said he, "my thanks are due to your ladyship, for having honoured it—with Miss Upton and Miss Bellairs."

"O pray, Mr. Warfield," she answered, "don't turn Isabel's head with compliments; she is only a child."

"No, Mr. Warfield," said Flora, "you are quite mistaken, I assure you; we are both children, and of no consequence whatever to anybody, but—I like compliments all the same; nice ones, that is; and as you are kind enough to waste one on us insignificant creatures, why, I thank you for my share. Which is very good of me, seeing that I am only included out of compassionate politeness."

"O, Miss Bellairs! you wrong me greatly," he answered, laughing. "How can you sup-

pose me capable of ignoring the power of the queen of the revels." And as he spoke, he bowed low.

But Flora laughed and pouted, and shook her head; and turning to Isabel, said,

"What have you done with my flowers, Isabel? You don't generally lose them."

"Flora!" said Isabel, blushing.

Mr. Warfield interposed—

"Ah! Miss Bellairs, as you are strong—be merciful! Surely the queen of all hearts will not grudge me a few flowers!"

"A few flowers?" said Flora, "certainly not. I should be happy to present you with a basketful; but I do feel rather injured that my dear bouquet, that I arranged for Isabel with all my heart in the work, should be given to *any* one."

"O, Isabel is mad after wild flowers," said Lady Upton, "she would throw any thing away for a bunch of weeds! And, really, it appears to me to be a fitting retribution, Flora; you know you have always encouraged her in it."

"Dear Flora," said Isabel, "indeed I wouldn't

throw them away; you know how I always value your flowers, and keep them;—don't."

"Well, dear, I won't," replied Flora. "But you see you have *not* kept them *this* time. Come, let us compromise. Give me those to soothe my wounded feelings."

"Flora," said Isabel, while the tears came to her eyes—they *did* come far too readily—"you were never unkind to me before;" but she did not offer to give up her flowers; nay, she even held them a little tighter, as fearing they might be taken.

"And you never gave away my flowers before," retorted Flora.

"Dear me," said Lady Upton, "how absurd! A new version of 'Much Ado about Nothing.' Throw the rubbish away, Isabel, and let us hear no more about it. Mr. Warfield will think you both *too* childish *even* for your age."

Isabel looked pitifully to Flora, then to Harry, for help, but neither of them would meet her gaze. Then a little flush came into her face, and a light into her eyes, as she turned to Mr. Warfield with something of triumph; *he* would help her, she knew.

He had been waiting for the look.

His eyes answered it, and he said,

"Ah! Lady Upton, spare my feelings, I beseech you! Think what they would be to see the result of my labours thrown away before my eyes! Let Miss Upton take them home, that I may at least not *see* the sacrifice. Afterwards, I leave them to her mercy."

"You see, Mr. Warfield joins in the comedy, mother," said Sir Harry, who had hitherto walked on in silence, brooding over his injuries, freshly brought to mind by Mr. Warfield's marked attention to the party; "You see, Mr. Warfield joins in the comedy, mother," he said, "takes the chief part, indeed, so it won't do to disparage its importance; but it strikes *me* it's as likely as not to turn out a 'Comedy of Errors'—or a Farce—may be even a Tragedy!—who knows?"

"It strikes *me* that you children are bewitched; or that the excitement has been too much for you," said her ladyship, who did not at all approve this tone to a man in Mr. Warfield's position—their host, too! "I don't understand you in the least, and I am charitable enough to suppose that you don't understand yourselves."

“And it strikes *me*,” said Flora, “that we are very cross and disagreeable, Sir Harry and I, that is; and deserve to be put in the corner, like fractious children, as we are. It’s of no use pouting, Harry, it’s quite true. We *are* fractious and horrid. Luckily, here’s the carriage. Pray put us in as soon as possible, Mr. Warfield, or there may be more than *rumours* of wars.”

Mr. Warfield smiled, and said, as he helped them in,

“As a loyal knight I obey your orders, Miss Bellairs; but don’t demand the impossible, and require me to agree with your sentiments. As well expect me to find flaws in the *actual* sunbeams as in those which have shone on my poor efforts, and been the light and crowning glory of the day. Believe me, the worshipper at such a shrine is too dazzled for criticism;—he can only adore!”

Sir Harry muttered something between his teeth, a short and expressive word, that was not heard; it was “Bosh!”

Flora, who had quite recovered herself, laughed, as she replied,

“Very pretty, Mr. Warfield; but you see

you admit that there may be room for criticism, —if only you could see! So it is not *quite* perfect!”

But Mr. Warfield made no response. His hand held Isabel's for a moment as he put her in the carriage; his eyes feasted on her form. “Good bye,” he said, as he pressed the hand, he had no flowery compliments for *her*; “*good* bye.” And she said, “Good bye, thank you so much,” in a low, sweet voice, that had a tremble in its tone; and then the carriage rolled away. But as it went, the downcast eyes were raised, and he had yet another glance to treasure in his heart.

He was content. “Mine!” he thought, as he stood there, “mine! I can hold her against the world!”

Soon the last guest had departed, and, save for a few hurrying servants, the silence and solitude that had so long reigned over Warfield Chase resumed their sway. Mr. and Miss Warfield, as they walked together towards the house, looked up at its wide grey front, whence the sunlight had died, and been replaced by pale, silvery moonbeams, which threw fantastic

shadows along its surface, and made strange, dark corners in angles that suited them.

She saw the darkness—*he* the light; she shivered slightly—he smiled. As he looked at the fair, soft picture, the idea of Isabel mingled with it tenderly, gently; it suited her, it was to be her home, her home and his. His soul was full of love, love large enough to embrace every earthly creature; and it overflowed on his sister. He spoke to her common words, but they fell on her ear like music; never yet had she heard such tones.

“Well Priscilla,” he said, “this great affair is over, and you did your part very well; I had no cause to be ashamed of my sister.”

“I am glad you are satisfied, Gerald,” she replied, “but really the only effort was in beginning, I did not find it difficult.”

“Ah!” he said gaily, “I told you so! Why, before we get to the end of the series you will like it, and be quite a ‘gay ladye.’ What do you think now of your morning’s fears?”

“They seem foolish, certainly,” she answered, “but they were very real and not unnatural, I think; and you were hard on me, Gerald.”

"Well," he said, "perhaps I was; perhaps I have been too hard altogether; I daresay we shall both be better for seeing something of our fellow-creatures. You will admit, though, that it would have been a mistake on your part to stay away. And you know I really could not have got on at all without you; as it was the thing was as nearly perfect as it could be."

"You are strange to-night, Gerald," she said, "you don't speak like yourself at all!"

"Perhaps I have turned into another self," he answered, as he smiled; "there *are* wonderful transformations sometimes, you know."

"I don't see what should have worked one in *you* though," she said, with a touch of suspicion. And as he walked on in silence, still wearing that happy smile, the thought of Flora recurred to her, and she spoke again,

"What a lovely girl Miss Bellairs is," she said: "her hair is like threads of gold!"

"Is it?" he answered absently: "yes, she is very lovely."

Miss Warfield gave a little sigh of relief. She felt safe. If Flora had not charmed him, who could? She did not even think of Isabel; from the first it was Flora she had dreaded,

Flora she had watched ; Flora absorbed her, and she was one of the very few who did not notice Isabel's absence with Mr. Warfield.

They entered the library.

"Sit with me a while, Priscilla, will you?" said Mr. Warfield, when his sister offered to say good night.

As she sat down she flushed a little, even so much kindness was new to her; and a little flutter of expectation possessed her, what could it mean? but she did not fear; no, she smiled at her brother, and said,

"With pleasure, Gerald, I would often sit with you if you cared to have me."

As she finished speaking, she turned to look out of the window on the moonlit lawn: then started, as if stung, and turned sick and faint.

And yet there was no horror looking in; no strange shape to frighten her; only, on a small table, a bouquet of flowers. Fair, and pure and sweet they showed in the silvery light; and yet no scorpion could have stung her more!

A minute she sat still, while he went on with his dreams and never saw her; then she pointed to them and spoke in a sharp, hard voice, full of pain.

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"I understand the transformation *now*," she said: "there, I see, is the enchanter's wand! The books tell us true tales, then, and no stories! A bright eye, a smooth, round cheek, a little waving hair—and lo! the purposes of a life are scattered to the winds, and the immovable resolutions are as chaff before them! O! what fools these mortals be!" And she laughed in mockery, a laugh that sounded strange and hollow.

"Hush, Priscilla," said Mr. Warfield, kindly. "Be sensible, and listen to me; I was going to tell you."

"O, you were!" she answered, "how kind of you! It is true, then, quite true! all settled and arranged. You have not lost much time! Do you know what you said to-day? Yes, absolutely to-day, here, in this very room? Really, you have been good to me, considerate, and not let me get used to playing the great lady, which you thought I should like so much! Gerald, you are mad!"

"Be quiet, Priscilla, be quiet," he said, in a tone of command, "or I shall think *you* are."

But she had touched him; his words of the morning came back to him—far off and strange

they seemed—still they *had* been his words. What if he were right then, and wrong now? What if his new hopes and joys were a mere delusion, from which he should some day awake, and find them vanished like an idle dream? He, too, was looking at the flowers; and, as he looked, a vision of Isabel seemed to stand before him—pure, fair, delicate as they; and again a smile of hope and trust chased the troubled shadows from his face.

“Priscilla,” he said, “I have been wrong, we have both been wrong, the teaching of our lives has been all wrong. There are beings on this earth fair and good, worthy of all trust and love; and love is the joy of life. One such I have found. She is too young to have known love; I shall teach it to her. And, once my wife, I will guard her with such loving care, and make her life so great a joy, there will be no room for even a thought of temptation or treachery.”

“All which means,” she retorted bitterly, “that you are in love, neither more nor less, simply in love; and, like any school boy, dress your idol to your mind and then bow down before it. But no, not quite, that wrongs you.

The boy trusts his idol recklessly, naturally, without thought or reason; but *you*, you have a reason, a most excellent reason: it is—that she has never been tried!

“Priscilla, be calm;” he said, “this passes all bounds; I will not endure it. Why should you storm and rave because I purpose to marry, like another? Why should you grudge me this joy that has come into my life? What harm can it do you?”

“What, indeed!” she replied, “only take my brother from me, and, truly, he has never been much! Why should I speak except for you? I will not fetch a pistol and shoot you, as you said this morning your best friend should, but I *will* tell you the truth—what *must* be true, even if your idol be all you think. I grant her pure, true—perfect, if you will—and still I tell you, you are preparing misery and shame, for her and for yourself. For there is no faith in you. Your temporary trust is the result of passion, when one dies the other will die; and then will re-appear the latent doubt and suspicion, more than enough to work, alone, and all unaided, the ill they

dread. Ah! you smile, you wonder that *I* should talk; and think to yourself, ‘what folly! as if *she* could know!’—but I am woman enough for *that*, at least.”

“I think you are very foolish and high-flown, Priscilla; and very much mistaken. I *do* trust Miss Upton, entirely; who, seeing her, could doubt? Not I, sceptic as you think me.”

“Miss Upton!” exclaimed Miss Warfield, in surprise. “Can you really mean that you intend to marry that timid child?”

“I can, and do,” was the answer.

“Then, I pity her,” she continued. “All things look bright and fair before her, she will be lady and mistress, and may turn *me* out; still, I pity her!”

Mr. Warfield’s new-found gentleness and patience were vanishing fast, and this speech banished the last remnants. He had borne much—for him; but this he could not bear. Where is the man that *can* bear that a woman should be thought an object of compassion because she is to be his wife? He laughed aloud, the old sneering, mocking laugh; and

then he spoke in the old tone, a tone that would have been a sneer, even if uttering loving words.

"So all the disinterested, romantic sentiments are explained!" he said. "It is love of yourself, I see, and not of *me*; fear for your *own* future, not *mine*, that prompt this wondrous solicitude. I think I can relieve it. Pray don't be alarmed, there's room enough. I shan't turn you out, and I don't think Isabel would harm any living thing: be tranquil, you have nothing to dread. But remember," and the tone grew stern, "you are not to look upon my wife as 'a timid child,' but *as* my wife, and mistress of Warfield Chase and all that it contains."

"Gerald, you are cruel, horribly cruel," she cried; "and I hate her, yes, *hate* her. If I only knew how to earn my bread I would eat yours no longer; yours, that will soon be hers! Surely my father had no right to leave me in this horrible dependence; he gave me life; he ought to have given me bread!"

"O, if *that's* all, Priscilla," said Mr. Warfield, "pray don't excite yourself! You can go when and where you like; I only hope it may

not be into a lunatic asylum ! I will settle a sufficient income on you at once, and then there will be no necessity for you to *eat my bread*, as you poetically express it, any longer."

"Don't, Gerald, don't speak to me like that," said she, shrinking as from a blow. "You know I have nobody in the world but you;—where should I go? Let me stay, and I will be patient and quiet, and learn to bear it as best I may."

"Stay, by all means, if it pleases you," he answered. "*I* did not propose your going,—never thought of such a thing ! But *do* try, if you can, to be rather more like a rational creature than you have been to-day; it will really oblige me. Such scenes are not to my taste."

"I hope you may never have any *less* to your taste," she said, bitterly; then, as she saw his eyes flash, she added, hastily: "Don't speak again, you will hurt me more, I know. I will go, *now*. Good night."

And the brother and sister, children of one mother, went to sleep under one heaven, beneath one roof; the one, after passionate sobbing and tears, with a blurred, weary face; the other, having dreamed waking dreams that sleep could

searce make sweeter, lay there in happy peace, smiling. Beneath one roof—yet how far apart ! So is it in thousands of houses this very night. So it was in the days of old ; so is it now ; so shall it be henceforth. “ Alone we live, and all alone we die.”

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Mr. Warfield awoke the next morning, he lay some minutes in a state of dreamy half-consciousness, which he tried to prolong with the idea that all the vague, happy feelings, the sense of wonderful bliss, that possessed him, would vanish on awaking. But the bright light shone in on him; spite of his efforts he grew more and more awake, and yet the strange visitors did not disappear: nay, they grew stronger, brighter, clearer. He was fully awake, he knew, yet he pinched himself to see; for the deep, sweet sleep had so steeped his soul in oblivion it could not at once seize the realities—the strange, new realities of his life. Another moment; and the events of yesterday, down to their most minute details, rushed into his mind; and he knew it was true—real: he *did* love—no dream, but fair flesh and blood: soon, he would also be loved.

Of his sister he never thought, nor of his doubts and fears, nor of the weary past: the present and the future filled his soul. And truly they were large and fair enough to satisfy the heart of any man—only the heart of man is, alas! the one thing in the world that never *can* be satisfied.

But he did not think so *then*. He leaped from his bed and dressed rapidly, and rushed upon his work with eager joy. He wanted work, labour, effort; he wanted, too, to clear the work off, and go to Isabel. So he wrote: strong, rushing words, that stir the hearts of men. Without pause, or error, or correction, he wrote on; the life and energy and power of his spirit pouring themselves out in a rushing torrent, for which the mechanical means were sadly slow.

Breakfast-time came, and with it a message to say that Miss Warfield had a headache and would not come down. Still he wrote on, and on, until his work was done for that day. A good day's work it was that he had done in those morning hours; and as he looked at it he laughed, rejoicing, not only with the sober joy that attends accomplished labour, but with the sense

of his power and strength. He was alone, and he spoke aloud: "I shall win; win both! Ah! this is a life worth having!"

Then he went to breakfast, and attacked it with equal energy and vigour; he was no pinning sentimentalist, but a strong man; and the food was pleasant to him—he had earned it. Besides, the love that pines and frets and refuses its food is hopeless or suffering: successful love, like other successes, brings with it a good appetite, and good digestion to wait thereon. In success, in joy, there is more life, power, action, and they want more feeding. A sadly prosaic view of the case; but while we inhabit these mortal bodies, prose is forced upon us; and our most sublime moments and most soaring aspirations are painfully, ludicrously near to common-place wants; nay, actually dependent on their being supplied.

Where is the poet that can pour his soul in burning words of power that shall thrill the human heart in ages yet unborn, if that same body be cold and wet, tired and hungry? Where is the lover that can *then* go into ecstasies with his mistress's hair and eyes, or dwell, even on her lips? Where! Echo only

answers. But let him, that body which is part of him, be warmed, and fed, and comforted; and then the soul may have leave to sing, and soar, and love; otherwise its wings are held close down, there is not even a flutter to show that the captive exists.

So, don't be indignant with Mr. Warfield that, being a lover, he ate a good breakfast. He was all the better lover for it, I assure you, and more fitted to enjoy all things, yes, even spiritual things. Fasting does *not* spiritualize; it weakens and deadens certain powers, and partially destroys, but in no sense creates; it leaves the subject more incomplete, more imperfect, a different being certainly, but an inferior: not the whole, perfect man whom God created.

Having then got through his work and his breakfast equally well, Mr. Warfield went on his way, rejoicing. Rejoicing in the fair earth, never before *so* fair; rejoicing in the light, and the verdure, and the soft, balmy air; rejoicing in the present and the future; rejoicing in the mere life that beat in his pulses, as his horse, feeling the master's spirit in every nerve, bounded and rejoiced too.

As he entered the drawing-room Lady Upton saw him with surprise, and thought, "really he is a very handsome man!" And she made herself pleasant to him, for she was flattered by his attention,—and he, of course, made himself as pleasant to her as he possibly could. But they got no nearer the object of his visit. She kept the talk almost wholly on the election, thinking that the most interesting of subjects to him; and when he tried to bring her round to Isabel by means of the party of the day before, she immediately added that to the old theme, and considered the effect it would have on his chances. He got impatient, vexed; and began to feel like a fool. "It was too absurd," he thought, "and he wouldn't sit listening to a tiresome woman's twaddle any longer!" If Lady Upton had only known how he qualified her mentally! But she didn't. He broke in on her talk rather abruptly, saying,

"I hope Miss Upton is not suffering from yesterday's fatigue, that I do not see her? I fear it was inconsiderate on my part to take her so far."

"I believe she is quite well," said her unconscious ladyship, "she is not easily fatigued ;

—but as I was saying,—about those people in Green Bottoms!—”

“Excuse me, Lady Upton,” he resumed, “you are extremely kind, and believe me I value your interest most highly; but may I be allowed to tell you the special object of my early visit this morning?—it requires some apology.”

“None, Mr. Warfield, I am honoured by it. But tell me, pray.”

“I fear you will think me bold, being so lately a stranger;—I will not call myself one now,”—her ladyship made a gracious inclination;—“but I have come to beg of you the *greatest* favour, the *highest* honour;—Miss Upton’s hand.”

“Miss Upton’s hand! For yourself, Mr. Warfield? Can you be serious?”

“Most serious!” said Mr. Warfield.

“Why, she is a mere child, and you only saw her yesterday!”

“I *have* seen her,” he said, “and it is enough. It is my strongest hope and wish to make her my wife.”

“But surely you have not considered. Will you not want some affection from your wife?”

You can hardly think it will have sprung up in a day, in a girl of seventeen!"

"Pray don't mistake me, Lady Upton," he said, "I know it well, and would not even wish to make her my wife until it had sprung up. What I want is your leave to try to wake it, and make it grow; I ask for no definite arrangements, no settled time for marriage. But, have I your leave to love your daughter, and try to make her love me?"

"You surprise me so greatly," she answered, "I hardly know what to say. Surely you had better wait—reflect?"

"While some one snatches away my prize?" he returned. "No, your ladyship, not so."

"There is hardly so much danger, I think," she said, while a slightly satirical smile played round her lips. "Pray pause, and recollect that repentance may come too late. I must admit that I was never a believer in this love at first sight, so I may not be a fair judge; but I have heard from those who are believers that it is apt to be very ephemeral,—as quickly lost as found."

"Mine is no first fancy—no boy's love, Lady Upton," he answered; "it has apparently

come suddenly, it is true; but it is the dream of my life realized, it is part of me; it *cannot* change."

There was a pause. They both sat silent, waiting. He, without fear, but a little annoyed and impatient, not having anticipated any obstacles to his proposals; and, indeed, where else would he have found them? And she, invaded by contradictory wishes and thoughts; not knowing what to say, not knowing even what she would *like* to say, vexation and pleasure were so strangely mingled. That Isabel should have made such a conquest at sight, that she would escape from her power, and queen it over half the county—was detestable. That she, as her mother, would be greatly courted and envied—was agreeable. . That she would get rid of her, and be no more haunted by her pale face, and timid manner, and creeping ways—she hated her, remember—was alluring. Altogether, judged as she judged it, from her own point of view only, the balance was in favour of letting her go. And she saw it from no other. Not one thought of her daughter's happiness or welfare, not one idea of possible danger or suffering, came to her. The only personal

feeling she had to *her* was one of grudge and envy that she should have gained so great a prize.

She still sat silent, wearing a slight frown; knowing well now what she would say, she still deferred it—let him wait!

But he was not inclined to wait, and spoke again.

“No wonder you think me romantic and absurd, Lady Upton,” he said, “I ought to have spoken of settlements and jointure. I can easily satisfy you on that point; let them be what you will; and for dowry, I want none.—May I hope you will answer me now?”

“A little smile just dawned in her face, but was suppressed. “He won’t be very easy to live with!” she thought; then she said,—

“Pray don’t suppose my hesitation arose from any such cause, your position is too well known. But Isabel is so very young, and the acquaintance so very short, I can hardly realize it. I can but say that you do her great honour, and I only hope she may appreciate her good fortune. You have my best wishes, Mr. Warfield.”

“How shall I ever thank you?” said he. “I

may hope, then, that if I win her, you will consent to an early marriage?"

"You go rather fast," she answered, smiling, "just now it was to be no question of marriage at present."

"Ah, your kindness emboldens me, you see," he replied, with an answering smile.

"Well," she said, "having said yes, once, I suppose I must say it again. When you have her consent, you will have mine."

"That is all I ask," he said, "you are *too* good; I have nothing more to wish for."

"Not even hers?" said she, a little curiously.

"Ah, yes, indeed!" he replied. "But I hope, I believe, that with time I shall surely win that."

"Well," she said, "may success attend you! If you will excuse me I will go and send her to you, as I suppose you would like to see her?"

"Why, yes," he said, "I should, indeed; but could I not go to her?"

"Oh, don't think of such a thing! I will send her."

And, for the first time in her life, Lady Upton went herself to fetch her daughter.

She found her, as she expected, in her old

school-room—a square, bare room, with shabby carpet, four plain chairs, and painted bookshelves, holding some much-used school-books. This was her usual sitting-room.

As the door opened Isabel looked up, and, seeing Lady Upton, dropped her brush on the drawing of wild flowers she was making, and covered it instinctively with a piece of paper lying near. She was afraid—horribly afraid; she had never seen her mother there before.

Lady Upton stood looking at her with cold contempt, yet curiously, as a peasant might regard a picture which he knew was valued highly, and in which he could see no beauty, wanting the power of perception. But here that was not the only want. What Lady Upton saw was a picture of fear, and in fear there is no beauty.

She could find none, and gave it up.

“Deceit, as usual, Isabel,” she said; “deceit too weak to deceive. Go into the drawing-room.”

Isabel went without a word; but with a trembling heart. Was she sent to sit there merely as a punishment, or did some strange, unknown trouble await her? She could not

guess, and dared not ask. The thought of Mr. Warfield did indeed cross her mind, but it could not be that! When did her mother ever bring her good news? So she went in fear—the worst of all fears, that which knows not what it dreads—and stood outside the drawing-room door not daring to turn the handle, till an approaching terror—the sound of her mother's steps—forced her to open it.

She shut it behind her, then stood and looked up to find the object of her fear; she looked, and saw—the embodiment to her mind of safety and rest and love—Mr. Warfield coming towards her.

The change was too sudden, the revulsion too great,—she burst into tears.

He had reached her by this time, and taken one of the hands, and he looked down into her face with a yearning love, that found it hard to do no more.

“Isabel!” he said, “Don’t, pray don’t! Surely you do not fear me, Isabel?”

But there was no answer, only tears and choking sobs, and his heart began to fail him.

"Isabel!" he said, "I would not hurt you for the world; if you fear me, I will go."

"No," she said. "O, no!" And she clung to his hand, and raised her eyes and looked into his, with a child's trust.

"Then come to me, darling, and let me comfort you; I have gained the right!" And he opened his arms, and she fell on his breast, and sobbed there still, while he held her close—close, and looked at her with wondering, loving eyes.

But soon the sobs ceased, and she raised her head, and withdrew herself from his arms, and sat down, saying, shyly,—

"How silly you must think me!"

He sat down near her, and, for all answer, said, so tenderly!

"Tell me, love, why you cried?"

Those strange, rebellious tears began to come again.

"Nay, nay," he said, "not if it is to make you cry again! *Only* say it was no fear of me—of being my wife."

"O, no!" she said; "if I had known you were here I should not have been afraid. But

mamma came for me, and that frightened me, and I didn't know what it was; and when I saw you it made me cry, but I was not afraid any longer."

"My child! Then Lady Upton did not tell you?"

"No."

"Not what I came here for to-day?"

"No."

"But I think you know now, Isabel; do you not? I came to ask for you, and you are given to me; if you will. And it is your will, is it not? You will come to me, and be mine, my very own, my wife; and then no one shall hurt you, or make you afraid any more, my poor, timid dove! You *will* come?"

"Yes," she said, with a trusting smile,—
"only—if you should be sorry after!"

"My darling!—what shall I say? I am *more* than content, *more* than happy! I thank God for the day I was born!"

"O, Mr. Warfield!" she cried in distress,
"I am not worth so much, indeed I am not! You are mistaken, quite!"

"Now, little fairy," he said, smiling, "you

are talking about what you don't understand, and had better be quiet. *I* know what I want, you see, and you don't. You will come soon, again, to see your dell, won't you? By the bye, *did* you throw my flowers away when you got home?"

"I was drawing them when mamma came for me," she answered.

"Why did you draw them?"

"Because I wanted to have them when they were faded."

"Will you draw mine for me?"

"Yes."

"You shall; but I shan't throw them away, for that. No, I shall keep them always, all my life; my Isabel's fair, pure, sweet flowers, that are so like her."

What could she say to this? Nothing! She sat with downcast, flushed face, a little stained by tears; a lovely picture!

He looked at her, and thought so.

"Isabel," he said, "I want something more, will you give it me?"

"If I can, you know I will," she answered.

"Then it is mine, for you *can*, and easily,

too; there is wealth enough to cover the loss a thousand times. I want a curl, Isabel, only a little one."

She rose, and got a pair of scissors from a basket on a table near to cut the curl, but he stopped her.

"Let me," he said, "I can see, and will cut it underneath; I would not disfigure this little head for all the world."

So she stood before him, and he fingered the rich brown hair, and tingled in every vein; he cut a curl, carefully, tenderly; then he said,

"Now, Isabel, *give* me a kiss."

She raised her head towards him, but only a very little, his lips might have touched her brow.

"No, your lips," he said.

She raised it higher, and then he kissed her, by her free will. Solemnly on the lips he kissed her; and so they were betrothed.

The clock struck one, and at the sound Isabel started. Mr. Warfield put his arm round her, and drew her to him. "Nay, my darling," he said, "what is there to fear? Neither earth nor heaven! You are mine, now, and safe; let those who would hurt you

beware!" Then he continued, lightly, "But to *me* it is a fearful sound, that detestable importunate, *one*, striking out so loudly, and thrusting itself between us; for it says I must go. Nay, let me hold you so," as she tried to withdraw, "it will not be for long! I have to meet my Central Committee at Bransford at two, and I want to see Binks, alone, first; and I will leave nothing undone that may help to gain the end! For I must win, now! more than ever I desire it! Now that I have my own fair lady to look down upon the lists, and her favour to carry on my shield! Surely, she will care for her true knight to win? She would not like to see him beaten?"

"O, no!" answered Isabel, gaily, "but there is no fear of that, you know! You are sure to win!"

"Am I, good fairy, why?" And his eyes were on her, always.

"Oh! because the people never could choose that funny little Mr. Bunton instead of you! I saw him when Pearson took me into a shop in Bransford, one day, and he held up his head in the queerest way, as if he were trying to look over everybody's head, and was too short;

he made me laugh. Oh, they would never choose *him* ! ”

And she stood there, quietly and happily, within his arm, and looked up at him with a little shy glance of admiration : if *he* wished to look over people's heads, he could do it without stretching, she thought, and her eyes said so.

He held her loosely, tenderly, and looked down on her with delight. He laughed brightly before he spoke, then said,

“ So those are your political ideas ! well, they have the charm of being simple and all on my side ; and they are, probably, as appropriate as many that will bear on the election ; and less interested. But you see, unfortunately, all the world does not share them, and I must do more than show myself to conquer. I must work very hard, and strive not to offend any of this same unreasonable world ; and, therefore, I must go now.”

“ Good-bye, then,” she said ; “ pray don't stay if you ought to go. If I could do any thing ? ”—she added, hesitatingly, and looked up at him again.

He laughed merrily, and said, “ O dear yes, of course ! I shall want you to make heaps of

blue rosettes! but I will tell you all about that to-morrow;—and my committee, you must know something of them;—and I really must try to introduce some notion of the differences between Tory and Liberal into that dear little head,” and he laid a hand upon it, and stroked the shining hair, “it would be rather awkward for the views of the wife of the county member to be quite so simple—charming as they are; and that’s the position I intend for you, little one. So you see I have my work before me, and must spend all the time I possibly can on you.—What do you say?”

“I will try to learn what you wish,” she answered, looking down timidly, and blushing, —“but I don’t know—I’m not at all clever, you know; but I *can* make the rosettes!”

“A most important point!” he said, laughing again, and pressing her a little closer; “and with my help you can do all the rest. And now, love, good-bye! there’s that horrid clock just going to strike the quarter, and I *must* go,—good-bye! I shall see you again to-morrow.”

He looked down upon her, a lingering look that was loth to leave; kissed her on the cheek, and was gone.

He sprang upon his horse, and again the sensitive creature answered to his spirit, and with an eager bound rushed upon his course. Where the road curved he turned to look upon the house that held his treasure, clinging, as we mortals do, to the very poorest, faintest links that still hold us to what we love; and there, at the window, stood a slight, young figure—Isabel's it must be! He waved his hand, then pressed his knees slightly against his horse, and went off in a swift, steady gallop, the very ideal of smooth, strong speed.

And so his soul rushed within him. There was less of eagerness, less of restless, happy longing than when he came; some touch of the quiet joy of fruition had fallen on him, and stilled the surface of his soul; but the strong under-current swept on with added force, swifter, quieter, darker, deeper, and more dangerous.

"It is done, I have won!" he thought, as his horse's long strides covered the ground, and he sat there calm, exulting, triumphant; the very swiftness and power of the animal reacting again upon him, who had given the first impulse. "It is done—I have won!"

‘Happy the wooing that’s no long adoin!’
Pshaw! why does that absurd thing come into my head! Yet there is often truth in those old sayings, and *if* there is in that, mine should be happy indeed! Was ever wooing so short! But it is not done yet. No! And yet she looked so sweet and fair as she stood there within my arm, close to my breast, quiet and unconscious as a baby-girl might be, it seems almost a sacrilege to change the picture. So pure, so sweet, so fair! Ah! but she will be fairer still when the eyes droop, and the voice trembles, and the tone of passion steals into it; when the crimson flush burns and pales in the cheeks, and the eyes will not look up, lest they should say too much! But they *shall* look up, and I will read it there, the love my soul longs for; the deep, passionate, wonderful love I have dreamed; that so few hearts *can* feel, so few eyes *can* speak; but that lies there, sleeping quietly in the depths of those wondrous eyes, of that clear, sweet soul! My darling, my darling! I *must* wake it soon! But not *too* soon! I must not startle and dazzle it at once with the full glare of noon-tide day, the beautiful, timid thing! No, I must wake it gently,

gently, like a young mother her precious first-born, and watch it dawn slowly into consciousness, and live, and grow and strengthen day by day, till it is—what my soul yearns for! O, happy day! Then she shall be mine indeed, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, part of my very self—my wife! And, ah! but it shall be a fair world for my wife! All bright things shall smile on her, her feet shall be among the flowers, and their sweet breath the fitting incense that shall rise to her! My fair Isabel! My queen among women! No guards, no solitude for *you*; no lack of aught this world can give, but ‘honour, love, obedience, troops of friends;’—and something so far sweeter, dearer, stronger, that they shall be as dross, chaff, stubble,—too poor and worthless to cost a single thought!”

Fast, fast, sped the noble steed; but all too slow for the glowing, rushing thoughts. “Hi, Wildfire, Hi!” he cried aloud, “On my brave boy, on.” And again the knees touched his sides, and faster and longer still swept the great strides till the horse’s body all but touched the ground, and the hedges rushed past in one long, straight line, and all the country whirled

and swayed, and they two only were still and firm in all the moving land.

“Ah! what days they will be! what bright, glorious days! What things I will do! Great things that shall stir men’s hearts and make me a name, a name that shall be on men’s lips, that they shall speak in reverence, with bated breath. Ah! it shall be a high name, a noble name; this name of my wife; a fitting name. Isabel Warfield! How sweet it sounds! But that is not enough. If I might have lived in the old days, when there were giants in the land! Or gone against the Saracen with sword and shield, and brought back rich spoil to lay at the feet of my queen; or met in her honour all comers in the lists, and gained the victor’s crown—for her! Pshaw! I am drivelling! Are there not sterner struggles, nobler deeds, in these modern days than ever strength of nerve and muscle did? Fights and efforts, aye, and victories! in the field of mind that need the whole strength of the man—will, nerve, and brain,—body, soul, and spirit? For which he must toil and think and watch; for which he must labour as a very slave—but to his own idea, his own great purpose that he

sees before him. And how glorious the reward! What are a few short words of kings, forgot as soon as uttered; what laurel crowns whose glory pales ere yet their leaves have withered; what the brief acclaim of a few gaping hundreds; what are all these to the admiration, the almost worship of countless thousands—millions!—the present meed of a champion, a leader, a hero in the strife? And *I* can be that man—I *will* be. Thousands shall pass my name from lip to lip, thousands more shall catch it up, and sound it from shore to shore! and *I* will turn to Isabel, my wife, and say, *you* did it!”

“Hi! Wildfire, Hi!” again he cried aloud; “no lagging, boy; this race *shall* be to the swift, this battle to the strong; swift, and strong and steady, Wildfire. Lay yourself to the ground, my boy. On, Wildfire, on!”

Was it a living horse and man that flashed through the still summer lanes; or was it truly, Wildfire?

The frightened birds stopped singing, and hid their little heads beneath the leaves; the sheep and cattle fled, helter skelter, as they came near; the plough-boys stood and gaped

after them with open mouths; and carters, whose carts were on the road, drew a long breath when they had passed, thankful that the heavy carts had escaped the whirlwind, and never dreaming that it might have dashed against them and been broken!

His thoughts went on.

“And this name, this great name, must not die. No,—my son must bear it; hers and mine. Children shall be born to me, and little steps shall patter along the old hall, and childish voices fill it with mirth and laughter; and the ghosts shall be scared away, and in all the dark corners light shall shine. Children! mine and hers. Ah! the dear, precious children!”

And at thought of the children, the little children—so fresh, so sweet, so pure—the fever in him slackened; then the whole body relaxed, the hand held the bridle loosely, and his eyes fell upon his foam-flecked horse, and he pulled him in gently, softly; and patted him on the neck, and soothed him; calling him “brave boy,” “good Wildfire,” and the like; which was *his* reward, and would, to his mind, have paid him if he had strained his heart out.

And what more can one say for any of our

prized successes, our cherished hopes—sought for with such pains and labour, reached through such sore distress? To our minds, they will pay us; therein lies their worth. Let another value them, and they would be to him as Mr. Warfield's praise of his horse. But what is that to us? While they are worthy to our minds, they *are* worthy. Grudge us not our poor treasure, ye wise ones; seek not to show us that its gold is only withered leaves, or will be;—for what can you give us in its stead?

So he walked on quietly for awhile; his passion spent, mentally resting; just conscious of the sights, and sounds and scents, that lay along his path, and mingling them with vague ideas of Isabel, until he began to think of her definitely again—more as she was, less what he had made her. As he did so, he half smiled at his own wild flights.

“Dear child,” he thought; “how astonished she would be! And that is all in the future, a future that will never come, if I neglect the present! Let me be steady, sensible, prosaic; I think I must have been drunk, though not with wine. Well, it is a sweet madness; I could not wish it less!—But now for this same

present. I, Gerald Warfield, of Warfield Chase, have proposed for Miss Upton, and been accepted. What, in this common-place world, ought I to do next? Why, put my house in order, of course, make it fitting for a fair young bride; and not bring her into an old, faded place, that has never seen anything new since,—since my father married. I wonder how *he* felt then? But pshaw! what is it to me? things are so different. Isabel is so different from—the woman that was my mother.”

There, by himself, under the summer sky, his face flushed deeply, and he rode on moodily, his thoughts checked suddenly by this unwelcome idea; but soon he threw it off.

“Avaunt! ye meddlesome imps! I will have none of you! Hey! for an army of upholsterers and painters, and all the other tortments required to make an old house young again! For pony carriages and pianos and silken boudoirs, and all the other necessary rubbish! I must write to town to-night, for of course they will make a fuss about time; and time is just the one thing I can’t afford to give them! Ah! Here is Bransford! Now for my charming committee and all their works

and ways! now for twaddle, and trickery, and bosh! now for being all things to all men, Gerald Warfield—all for the sake of our glorious Constitution! Good bye, my little innocent dove, for a time: even you would come out smirched from such a mire!”

And Mr. Warfield dismounted at the door of the White Horse, whither his meditations had carried him,—a quiet, polished, courteous gentleman; not a touch of Wildfire visible about him: it was all hidden away within, and firmly covered with a thick crust—the crust of will and habit, of conventionality,—which is but a mixture of the two.

And in this he was not singular: we should, I fancy, be no little surprised if we had a glimpse of the smouldering fires hidden in many volcanoes that go very quietly about the world. Some smoulder on without noise or sign till the grave swallows them up, bodily, and they are lost in oblivion. Some seethe, and roar and labour, equally unsuspected, till the hour comes; then they burst the thick crust and pour forth a torrent of burning, fiery destruction, that lays waste all life and hope along its

course, and leaves only desolation and barrenness for evermore.

But to return to Isabel, about whom was surely nothing volcanic; what were *her* thoughts meanwhile?

She stood at the window and watched Mr. Warfield mount his horse, watched him down the drive, saw him turn and wave his hand, and thought how handsome he was, and how well he looked on horseback, so firm and easy and at home; and the fable of the Centaurs occurred to her mind. Then she sat down, and thought how wonderful it all was; how strange that he should care for *her*, and how good and kind he was—that she should never be afraid of *him*! And then she thought of her mother, and wondered whether she ought to stay where she was or go back to her schoolroom; and felt sure that whichever she did it would be wrong. And this thought drove Mr. Warfield entirely out of her mind, and she sat there in nervous dread, waiting and listening for what should come next, not daring to go and meet it.

The time seemed long to her, and she could have fancied she had been sitting there an

hour—really it was about ten minutes—when Lady Upton entered the room.

“So, the fair knight has departed, I see,” she said, “and the maiden sits in meditation; may I ask if it is fancy free!”

“Mamma?”

“Have you accepted Mr. Warfield?”

“Yes, mamma.”

Lady Upton came and took a seat near her daughter, who was playing nervously with her fingers, and looking diligently at a particular spot in the carpet.

“Oblige me by keeping your hands still, Isabel,” said her mother, “and if you *could* hold up your head and look me in the face when you speak, it would be a relief,—but I suppose that is too much to ask.”

The hands trembled; then held each other tight; she raised her head and tried to look at her mother, but she could not; her eyes passed on, and found another place of refuge—a vase of roses.

“Well? have you nothing more to say?” resumed her ladyship.

“No, mamma.”

“Had you nothing more to say to Mr. Warfield? Was it simply, yes?”

“I—I don’t know, mamma.”

“Really, how charming! and this is what has taken the fancy of a man like that!” Then, as she saw the slow tears roll down her daughter’s cheeks, she continued, “Still more touching! Perhaps that was the eloquence with which you moved him?”

“Oh, mamma!”

“Oh, mamma! Why, girl, you might be an idiot!—not without a keen eye for your own interests, though! you have had sense enough to snatch at the first offer made to you, and wisely, for it is very likely to be the last. Still, a little hesitation, a little holding back, might have looked better; it is not every girl of seventeen, who, at the first sign, would throw herself into the arms of a man she only saw yesterday; almost old enough to be her father, too!”

“Mamma, mamma, I don’t understand; *indeed* I don’t know what you mean,—I thought you had consented. If I have done wrong, I am sorry.”

“There is nothing wonderful in *my* having consented, of course I consented ; what else *could* I do with a man of such wealth and standing? Not a mother in the county would have refused him! But I doubt if *all* the girls, of seventeen at least! would have been *quite* so ready. Met yesterday, engaged to-day,—who knows? maybe married to-morrow!—or next week! It is a little quick for old-fashioned ideas of modesty and decorum! For one so young, a remarkable instance of devotion—to her own interests.”

“Indeed, mamma, I never thought of my interests, or Mr. Warfield’s position; it never came into my mind at all!”

“Well, no, I suppose after all, it *is* too sensible an idea to have found entrance into that receptacle of romance. But if you did not think of that, what did you think of? Are you supposed, by chance, to have fallen in love with the fair knight?—he is dark, by the bye.”

“No, mamma, but—I like him.”

“O! you like him! not a bad beginning for sweet seventeen! And pray may I ask how he has gained your gracious favour?”

“He is so kind, so good, and he said he

would take care of me always;—and—that he loved me.”

“And you believed him?”

“Yes, mamma.” And for a moment the quivering lips steadied, and a look of rest crossed the face.

Her mother went on again:

“Well, I will tell you the truth; if you do this thing it shall be with your eyes open and no blame of mine. He does *not* love you, he is *in love* with you; a very different thing. And this love is a short passion, a fever, that, when it has gained its object, fades and droops and dies as quickly and as surely as those poor, broken flowers you were drawing;—his gift;—and a fitting emblem, truly, of his so-called love.”

The girl sat and listened, hurt and wounded she hardly knew why; then her eyes wandered out upon the lawn and on to the drive, and she saw again, in fancy, the strong handsome figure and the waving hand. It strengthened her, and she sat unconvinced, with a little dawning of resolution and opposition in her face, which her mother saw, and which made her still more bitter. She was slipping from her grasp, slip-

ping fast ; soon she would be gone out of reach. She began again —

“I understand it all now; the interesting walk, and the delightful waterfall, and the exchange of flowers, tokens!—but I cannot blame myself for not having understood ; it was too sudden, too precocious ! And you have *his* dear flowers in water here ; and he has *your* dear flowers in water there ; nay, he may even have a lock of hair to kiss and rave to, things have gone so fast it would not surprise me ! Really it is quite pastoral and poetic ! But let me tell you, Miss Upton, that these pastorals are very short. A few days, and the fair flowers now watched and tended so carefully, and gazed on with such wondrous love,—will be brown, withered, dead ;—and they will be thrown away. As it is with them, so will it be with you ; the idol of an hour, the shunned and rejected burden of a life. I tell you the truth ; this fate, the fate of the flowers, will surely be yours ; choose it or refuse it, it rests in your hands.”

“Mamma,” said Isabel, standing up and trembling from head to foot, “I have chosen, my fate is with Mr. Warfield, and I would not

draw back, not if I believed you! For he does love me now, at least; he likes to see me, and speaks to me, O so kindly! and he says I shall be safe with him, and not afraid. And I have always been afraid of you, all my life, mamma, and you have never loved me; and you do not like to see me, or hear me, or touch me!—Yes, I have chosen my fate, and I am glad! And he will *not* tire of me and throw me away, as you say; I don't believe it! Why, even the poor flowers he is going to keep all his life;—and he will not be worse to me!”

“Really, Isabel,” said Lady Upton in a voice that tried to be all contempt, but trembled too a little, “how pretty! You positively surprise me! So the poor, little, ill-used dear pines and languishes for love, and is going begging for it! An appropriate explanation of the matter; such extreme want cannot of course be nice. Harry, too, will doubtless feel greatly flattered to know in what light you regard his affection. Starving, poor dear, absolutely starving!”

“O mamma!” said Isabel, sinking again on her chair, don't talk to me any more like that, please don't. You know I love Harry more than anything in the world!”

"Do you? That sounds somewhat peculiar under the circumstances. I doubt if, as a person of ordinary sense, he will take your recent act as a proof of it. Suppose you go to meet him on his way home, and tell him the good news a little sooner?"

"Mamma, I am sorry about Harry."

"Really, that is very kind. Go, then, to meet him, and console him."

"I *would* go, mamma; but he won't be coming for a long time yet; he was going to wait, and call on Mr. Dobree."

"Indeed! Well, there may some good come out of the affair; I shall, perhaps, know more of my son's doings when once you are out of the way."

"O, mamma! he must have forgotten to tell you! he went off in a hurry, you know."

"Thank you, that will do. I do not want a mediator between me and my son."

They sat in silence for some minutes, a silence that weighed very heavily on Isabel.

At last, Lady Upton broke it, saying,

"I am to take this affair as concluded, then?"

"Yes, mamma," said Isabel, quite steadily

"Then allow me to suggest to you that it will be desirable that you should pay a little more attention to your toilet. For a school-girl, it would be negligent; for your present position, it is absurd: why, your dress is actually shabby!"

"I have only one morning dress that is better, mamma, and I keep it to wear when I go to Bellairs Park."

"Ah! faultless, as usual! There is another point. You must not stay shut up in the school-room, but sit in the ordinary rooms like a rational being, and let yourself be seen by visitors; not that you are too old for a school-room, only it would look *too* ridiculous to have you married literally out of it."

"Very well, mamma."

"Now go, and send Pearson to me:"—and her ladyship's thought, as she watched her out of the room, was this,—"I must have her dressed at once, or it will be an absurdity as well as a disgrace."

After this manner did Lady Upton counsel and comfort her daughter on the subject of her marriage; and such were her thoughts there-upon.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT was a wonderful summer, that summer of Isabel's wooing and wedding. A summer in which the days and weeks succeeded each other in steady, bright, unbroken splendour; save for one storm, a storm long talked of, whose memory still lives, as, "The Great Storm."

The day had risen clear, and bright, and beautiful, like the days that went before it, and the earth lay basking, joyously, under a heaven without a cloud.

So it had lain for hours, when, suddenly, without sign or warning, the blackness of darkness spread swift and fearful over the blue, sunny sky, and lay a terror on the land, now covered by clouds of thick, sweeping dust. For minutes it so lay. Then, the very centre of that awful blackness was cleft from top to

bottom by one red, zigzag line of fire,—the signal; for, after it, the thunders crashed, and the rain and the hail fell, and strange forks, and streaks, and zigzags of fire, flashed and darted, and played all around; and the sound was as the roar of mighty waters; and the earth was a deluge; and the sky blackness and liquid fire.

Full many of the simple country folk thought the end of the world was surely come; and the good wives forgot their bread that was baking, in their fright, and the men fled indoors for refuge from that terrible storm; lips, worn to cursing, tried to form themselves to prayer; and pipes were laid away, and mugs of beer rejected by the thirstiest of souls. But, suddenly, as it had come, the darkness passed, the blue sky appeared, and the sun shone forth; all nature was renewed, and sparkled in its beams,—fresh, and fair, and sweet. And the thirsty returned to their beer and their pipes, the cursing lips resumed their cursing, the men found again their daily labour for daily bread, the wives remembered that same bread, and—as all things had been before, so they were again;—only the bread was burned.

The bright days of that golden summer-time succeeded each other without break or pause; and as it was without so it was within. Isabel was happy. Few were the days when Mr. Warfield did not come to her; and then there were walks in the Wilderness, and long, happy talks in which she heard again, and yet again, the sweet old story that never tires, in the telling, or the hearing, till it was ever present to her, and ran through all her thoughts and all her life like hidden music, tuning it to hope, and sunshine and love. Her step grew light, her eyes free and joyous, and often the young, girlish voice broke into silvery laughter that filled her lover's heart with gladness, and then they laughed together,—at the gambols of a sunbeam, or a butterfly, or a leaf sporting in the wind,—in sheer, youthful joy.

Ah! that fair summer-time, how beautiful it was. Why did it ever fade?

He told her all his doings, too; all the work of his long days was spread out before her, and she listened eagerly, and hoped and feared, and wished and felt with him through it all. Soon she knew all that famous Central Committee by heart. Lord Powerscourt, the courteous;

Sturgeon, the heavy and obtuse, whose understanding was beyond the reach of *any* argument except corn, or cattle or pigs, but who must be regarded as an oracle, inasmuch as his estate was large and he allowed no opinions on it but his own; lazy, lounging Dandy Curzon, Lord Powerscourt's nephew, who did good work among the women and children who always took to him kindly, and gave now and then a hint worth half-a-dozen prosy speeches; Mr. Greening, of Ilkley, the serious, earnest politician, who believed in his cause and worked for it with all his heart; these and many more she knew;—only there were few like the last!

In fact, she learned so fast and knew so much that when she met them in society, she delighted them one and all, and became a sort of queen, followed and sought and talked to eagerly by men of age and standing, as well as by the fluttering crowd of dancing youth; and a proud and happy man was Mr. Warfield when he saw grey heads bow down to her, and grave, experienced old eyes smile kindly and approvingly on her fair, young face.

A proud and happy man, for she was his own, and he was sure of her; though the

engagement was not yet declared. Lady Upton had resolutely refused to allow it within a month; it would look, she said, *too* absurd. Meanwhile he saw her almost daily, and shewed her all possible homage in society, so as to leave little doubt on the subject in any minds; he did his best, too, to carry on her education in the direction he most cared about, but here he was not quite so successful. She met him gladly and was ever willing to be with him; even to sit by his side while the gay waltz sounded in her ears, and her feet unconsciously beat time to it; nay, more, she loved him, as the bringer of hope and joy; the cause of the new, glad life she led, as loving her. She loved him,—and looked up into his face with smiling trust, and rested on his arm in safety and peace. She loved him truly, for O, it was sweet to feel herself loved; to be praised and admired, and followed with tender, watchful glances! Yes, she loved him truly, and was happy.

Happy in the gay, bright life she led; in the drives and walks, and picnics and balls; in all the pretty dresses and hats and bonnets that

came for her so abundantly from London; in her mother's new tone of civility and politeness; instead of sneering and snubbing, she let her alone;—and all this, first and last, came to her through Mr. Warfield's love: so she dwelt in it, and was happy.

Yes, she was happy—almost. But—that troublesome but,—when does it not intrude?—*But*, Flora was drifting away from her, and amid all her joy, she missed her. Flora was jealous. Jealous of Isabel's affection for Mr. Warfield; jealous, too, of *his* preference for *her*; and of all the admiration and incense lavished upon her to the temporary shadowing even of Miss Bellairs! She came more rarely, shunning Mr. Warfield whenever it was possible; and when she did see him, she was cross and pettish, or cold and sarcastic; utterly unlike her former self. Far from proposing that she and Isabel should dress alike and go together, she refused shortly when Lady Upton offered to take her, and dragged out poor Miss Millicent for the purpose. By so doing she still secured a triumphant entry on the scene, whereas, when she went with Isabel, she was but second. Poor

Isabel did not understand, and tried to bring her back to the old ways, but tried in vain; and the loss was a cloud in her sky.

Still she was happy—almost; even in spite of another and a bigger cloud. Harry was thoroughly antagonistic. He admitted her right to go; said he didn't wonder at it, what had she to stay for? but he felt himself injured and aggrieved, all the same, and was ever giving signs of the spirit that was in him; the spirit he had shown to Mr. Warfield on the day of his first party.

This latter was very patient, as he could well afford to be, but Sir Harry was not one whit appeased or consoled thereby. All the civility in the world did not alter the fact that Mr. Warfield had taken his sister from him, and bore him a grudge in his heart.

He, too, shunned their joint society; and would rarely stay with Isabel, even when she was alone; and when he did stay was by no means the easy, confidential companion of former days. He was out almost constantly, and spent the intervals between the frequent visiting with his mother and sister, at the Barracks;—to Lady Upton's great annoyance. But *he* too had fallen

in love—with the Incomparables, their words and ways; and specially with Charley Dobree—not so very much older than himself! and yet a complete man of the world! *He* would be an Incomparable too—and he set his heart on getting a commission, which his mother of course would not hear of; there was no longer any possibility of inducing him even to look at a book; and his long-suffering tutor resigned his post in utter despair. As Lady Upton employed the little time he spent at home in scolding and recrimination, he made it less and less; even taking refuge with his old friend Bob, and unburdening himself to his sympathising ears during long walks over the moors, when his spirit was utterly chafed and he had no other resource. And poor Bob, who loved and admired him as one of the most wonderful young gentlemen on earth, was the best of listeners and perhaps not the worst of counsellors; for he had a fund of shrewd common sense, and added to that, a feeling for his young master that gave him insight into his mind, and power to touch him. Little did Lady Upton think when she sneered and railed at Sir Harry for his love of low company, and threatened to

have Bob dismissed, that this same poor Bob had saved her son from many a scrape, and that his influence now kept him in the home he loathed :—but so it was. Bob agreed with all Sir Harry's complaints and ideas, and went even beyond himself in thinking him shamefully used ;—at the same time he had an innate conviction that home, even with all its drawbacks, was the best place for him, and he used all his poor skill to keep him there. For this Bob, though but a raw, slouching, country lad, was a loyal, faithful creature where he loved; and his love gave him insight, as love does to many who are neither wise nor strong.

Isabel knew him, and did not fear his companionship for Sir Harry, as her mother did ; but she mourned over her brother's alienation from herself ; her two friends would have no share in her joy, and so its brightness was dimmed ; they who had loved her and given her all they could, grudged that she should draw her pleasures from another source, and in their selfishness took from them what lay in their power to take ; and made it so, that instead of being quite happy, with true, gay, girlish happiness, she was only—almost ! Ah !

what would they not have given afterwards, that they had left her joyous days unclouded !

But so it is. There *is* no unclouded happiness on earth ; some doubt, some shadow hangs over it ever ; or, if the present is, by some strange chance, all bright and fair, a lurking fear attends it, we feel it unsafe, unreal, and cannot rest in our momentary bliss. No, happiness is not for us, not here. We must wait and hope. Wait still,—wait ever;—even till we reach the place, where, “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying ; neither shall there be any more pain.”

So the summer days sped on, and Isabel was almost happy ; her lover, too, was almost happy, almost content. All things went to his mind, he moved men with his breath and moulded them to his will ; and as the hushed, swaying multitudes listened to his voice and were thrilled by his spirit, he rejoiced in his power, revelled in it, and grew yet more free, more daring stronger. His canvass, though not so successful as some had predicted, equalled his expectations so far ; all things political smiled on him. So did all things social. His open devotion to Isabel, while it damaged him in one sense, in-

creased his prestige in another; and then it had come so soon that the damage was not very great, there had not been time for any very definite hopes or expectations to be built upon him.

His sister did not trouble him. If not resigned she was quiet, and hid carefully all rebellious feelings in her heart; where, we may be sure, he did not go to seek them. No, her passionate protest had passed out of his mind, and was for him as though it had never been. He was happy—almost. Would have been quite happy, if only Isabel had answered a little better to his teaching in that one respect, if he could have waked the love he wanted. But here he failed, and had to take patience and trust to time—and live on hope.

All things went well with him till the day of the storm. It was the day fixed for the meeting at Bransford, where he was to address the electors, who were expected to come from all the out-lying districts. He went himself, scouring along under the strange darkness lit by lurid fire, like the spirit of the storm; he and his horse the only living things that faced

it. And the brave horse, when he was first put to it, had quivered, and shrunk and feared; but his master was not one to brook his fancies or his terrors; if he would, he would; and his horse knew it, and faced the storm, as being the less terrible. So they took their strange, solitary way through it, only to find streets and market-place deserted, not even a stray dog to be seen. Mr. Warfield called on the Mayor, and put up his horse, and waited; and the storm passed, and the sunshine came, as we have said; but the people did *not*. It was evident there would be no meeting that day. And this was a serious check, for the writ had been received, the time of the election was drawing very near, and Mr. Warfield's supporters had counted greatly on the effect he would produce at this same meeting on the farmers of the surrounding district, many of whom could not be prevailed upon to pronounce for either candidate.

There was to be no meeting that day, nor for some days to come; every one was filled till they came to one within two days of the opening of the poll. They fixed on that per-

force; they could have no earlier, and, late as it was, that must be the day.

The Committee, when they met the next morning, looked generally glum, and were in a state of mind when something to grumble at is absolutely essential. They would have liked to grumble at Mr. Warfield, but couldn't very well, as he went; and they did *not*. The same idea restrained them from attacking the country people, they were but like themselves; there was no resource but the storm, and *that* was universally pronounced to have been the most unexpected, unreasonable, tremendous, aggravating storm, that had ever been seen or heard of!

However, there was no help for it, wait they must, and wait they did; exerting themselves meanwhile in all possible ways, but making no further progress with those obstinate, pig-headed farmers, who didn't want to be bribed, and couldn't be bullied.

They got to the very day before the postponed meeting, and were still in exactly the same position, as far as Bransford and its neighbourhood were concerned, as they had been a week before. Any one who had seen

them sitting in the large room of the "White Horse" on that day, would have concluded that their candidate's success was by no means certain; and that impression, or something like it, had actually attacked more than one of them. And it was the more uncomfortable as the contest had already been very costly, so costly that they felt they could hardly call on any one man to bear the burden; at least, if he lost. The obnoxious cotton-man, Mr. Bunton, had given them a great deal of trouble, much more than they had expected, having shown as much pluck and determination as his opponent, with an equal indifference as to means and carelessness of cost. Decidedly his little body held a big spirit; he was fighting for the ambition of his life, and nothing stopped him. This suited Mr. Warfield, who grew to feel almost affectionate towards him, so grateful was he for the struggle with a real, worthy foe, who had to be met, and fought inch by inch; but the Committee would have greatly preferred an easier contest, especially, as I said, if they were to fail after all.

Despite the greatness of the little man, however, they still had advantages over and be-

yond the talent and appearance of their own man.

Tradition, habit, the instinct of the people, were on the side of Mr. Warfield, lessening and weakening day by day, year by year, it is true; even now not very earnest nor very strong; still they told. Hundreds, of course, voted for him without fee or reward, as they would have done for any candidate on their own side; scores voted for him, not for nothing, but still for less than they could have got from Bunton; scores more, whose virtue might, perhaps, not have stood utterly without support, still required very little propping, and would not hear of Bunton as long as there was anything whatever to be got from Warfield. There remained, doubtless, a large body who could be moved only by the highest bidder; still these were great advantages

The committee knew all this,—none better; yet they did not look satisfied. Lord Powerscourt, the chairman, was seated at the head of a long table, round which the other members were placed, looking over a bundle of papers. He put them down with an air of impatience and leaned back in his chair, frowning slightly.

"Do you know, Warfield," he said, "I don't quite like the look of these returns; I fear it's getting rather a near thing."

"O, no fear, my lord!" answered Mr. Warfield, with a confident smile; "we are safe to carry the day—we *must*; if it looks doubtful, we will send down another shower."

"I fear all is done in that way that *can* be done," said his lordship; "the men that are wanting to us can't be reached by that means; and what is so intensely provoking is, that we fail principally here, in our own neighbourhood: you stand better for every other district. It is all that confounded storm!"

"O, don't speak of failure, pray, my lord," said Mr. Warfield; "we must get at them by some other means, if *that* won't do. Who are they, and what do they want?"

"A lot of independent fellows, squatted on little places about," was the reply; "but Binks knows most about it: tell us, Binks."

Binks was the local attorney, a sharp little man, something like a ferret. He spoke at once, in a quick, decided manner, that showed no doubt, and invited none.

"Yes, my lord," he said; "your lordship's

right; there are a lot of them, and money's no use; still, I think with Mr. Warfield, that there is no cause for fear: our numbers are good, and *our* people will stick to us. Still, Mr. Warfield, if you could get hold of these fellows, sir, it would make all safe; no fear, then;—you'd be as right as ninepence. And to do it, you've only to gain one man; they'll go after him like sheep: but that one man's the deuce!"

"What is his name, and where does he live?" said Mr. Warfield; "I *must* get him."

"His name's Brown, and he lives on the other side of Shooter's Hill: Oakbrook, they call his farm."

"What does he want?" continued Mr. Warfield;—really, I fear his views were hopelessly venal!

"Ah! there's the rub!" replied Binks; "he won't say,—says he wants nothing; and upon my soul I almost begin to believe him; for I've had him tried all ways! He's civil; but you might as well try to get anything out of a stone; the obstinate old brute won't utter a word. And it's the more remarkable that he's never given trouble before: voted blue all his

life and not cost a sixpence! There must be something at the bottom of it: the thing is to get at it."

"Really it's an awful bore," said Lord Powerscourt; "those damned independent fellows will be the ruin of the country: they ought to be bought out and sent to Australia, or somewhere. Why, that is the man who, they say, is going to speak at the meeting to-morrow. A pleasant idea, truly, that an ignorant lout like that may cause us to lose all our labour! For if he has the influence Binks says he has, and he goes against us, I really fear it will be a lost race; or so near a thing that that cotton individual will get up a petition and worry us out of our lives. Confound Brown, and all his followers!"

"No fear of the petition, at least, my lord," said Binks; "we're safe, *there*; they've rowed too much in the same boat to venture on it."

"No fear at all, my lord," said Mr. Warfield; "I undertake Brown; I will see him to-day, and he *must* be an unreasonable man if I don't satisfy him."

"You'd best be careful," said Mr. Greening, who had been listening intently, and had once before offered to speak, but waited, as he saw

Lord Powerscourt open his lips; "you'd best be careful; he's not an easy man to manage, and he fights very shy. I set Dick, one of my grooms, who comes from the village near his farm, to fish it out; and he told me this morning that they guess it is about widow Wilson, who has been threatened with ejectment from one of Warfield's farms, if her son doesn't vote for him. Dick says she was born there, and has lived there all her life; and she's a good soul, though her son is a bit touched with Radicalism. And they think that is what has incensed Brown, who has been a good friend to her since she lost her husband; and that very likely he won't vote at all—for he hates the Yellows like poison. So you see it's perhaps as well to leave him alone; for he might do worse!"

"Is it true, Warfield?" said Lord Powerscourt; "it *does* seem hardish, if it is."

"Likely enough," answered Mr. Warfield; "I don't know. But that is easily mended. He seems to be worth a good many widow's sons; so, it's a remarkable idea! but if he *does* want the widow's son, or the farm, let him have them,—either or both."

"It is not so easy, I assure you," put in Mr. Greening, earnestly. "I know the man; and I tell you he is shrewd and obstinate; very difficult to get to know what is in his mind, still more difficult to satisfy him: a man whom you can't bully or bribe, and who is too acute to be easily flattered.—Too good for us by half, in fact," he added, with a laugh.

"Why have you not sent some of the ladies to him?" said Dandy Curzon,—at the same time playing negligently with the little locket and seals attached to his watch chain;—"they would do it."

"By Jove! Dandy, you're right!" exclaimed Lord Powerscourt. "Who would have expected wisdom from you? But it's the very thing. Their delicious ignorance and innocence, and simple, coaxing ways, would do the business of a dozen Browns! You or I couldn't get his grievance out of the man, and if we did—well, *I*, for one, couldn't look him in the face and tell him it was all a lie, or a mistake: but they will, bless them! because they will think so. They have not the vaguest idea of the atrocities we are compelled to commit for the sake of the good old cause;—and if you want

a lie well told, that is the way to do it; make some one believe it, and then let *him* tell it—it's perfection! equal to truth itself."

"For the sake of patriotism, my lord, our queen and country, *patriotism!* *that's* the word," said Mr. Warfield, "and truly, I think, that in this case, the end justifies the means—dirty though they sometimes undoubtedly are; for they are the *only* ones, and the end is great and glorious. But the time is running short; any thing more of consequence, Binks?"

"Nothing, Sir, they're all made safe, all we can get; all but that cantankerous mule of a farmer, and his admiring satellites."

"Well, I think I can get him for you;" said Mr. Warfield, smiling, "leave him to me, and count upon him."

"It's a mistake, Warfield," said Mr. Greening, "believe me, it's a great mistake; you are a very clever fellow, we know; but young Curzon is right, the simplest woman in the world would have ten times your chances in a thing like this."

"Also, I am not going to attempt it," he answered, still smiling, "don't be alarmed. I

answer for the obstreperous Brown, but it won't be *I* that will gain him over."

"Oh! Oh!" cried Lord Powerscourt, amid a general laugh. "So that is your way of doing things yourself, is it? There is a potent little queen ready to come on the scene at any moment? Well, I more than suspected it, and congratulate you heartily. But pray don't waste any more time with us, this Brown is the important thing—gain him, and you are safe. So don't mind us. Leave us to conclude the routine work, and make all the final arrangements; with Binks here we can't go far wrong."

"Thank you," my lord," replied Mr. Warfield, "as you are so kind, I *will* go, for the distance is considerable and the time short."

"Not above a couple of miles, if you take the cross-cut leading through Jim's Hollow," observed Sturgeon, who had been sitting looking on, as if he understood all that was said and a great deal more, with the intensely wise expression of a ruminating ox.

"Good gracious, Sturgeon, you must have been asleep!" said Dandy Curzon, laughing

again. "Don't you understand? The queen has to be fetched!"

"No, I *don't*," he replied doggedly, "I don't see what the queen has to do with it; and I don't see what you're laughing at, either; it is only two miles, that way."

"So it is, Sturgeon," said Lord Powerscourt, soothingly. "Don't mind Curzon, we all know *him*, it doesn't take two straws to make *him* laugh, it's the one thing he *can* do." And he administered a sharp kick, under the table, to his young relative; for what would be the consequence if Sturgeon were offended? And he was well known to be utterly incapable of taking a joke, or even of understanding its nature; but he *did* appreciate Lord Powerscourt's remark, it suited him, as his lordship intended it should, and he laughed heartily, a loud guffaw, and said, in a self-satisfied tone of triumph,

"Got it between the eyes, that time, young gentleman, a regular facer!" and he sat back and laughed again.

The Dandy thought unutterable things; but he smiled and spoke not, having the fear of his uncle's boot before him. He smiled, and solaced

himself with thoughts of notable vengeance to be taken in the future, when the election should be over. Let Sturgeon look out, then! But, for the present,—he smiled, and rubbed the injured member with the other foot, and kept silence.

And the Meeting proceeded harmoniously to the transaction of its remaining business, while Mr. Warfield rode fast to Upton Hall, and considered what he should say to Lady Upton to induce her to lend him her pony carriage, and let him drive Isabel in it to talk to Farmer Brown: for he wanted the visit to be as little ceremonious as possible, and that was the way he meant to take her. Isabel's consent was a matter of course, but he feared difficulties on her ladyship's part; especially as the engagement had not been made public.

"Hang it all!" he thought, "she *must* consent; but I fear it will take me some time to bring her round. It's pure bosh, though, for pretty well all the world knows it by this time;—and *she* knows that as well as I do. I'll tell her the election hangs on it—it may!—and that is reason enough for any thing at these times; it will surely be reason enough for her!

all the more, as she wouldn't like me to lose now, I know. Unless I mistake her, she would greatly prefer being mother-in-law to the member for the county, to being mother-in-law to the man who had *tried* to be—and failed!" and he smiled. "Perhaps, after all, it won't be so difficult to make you hear reason, Lady Upton!"

He dismounted at the hall-door, fully prepared for battle, and determined on victory, easy or otherwise, and was met by the news that Lady Upton was *out*; an unforeseen contingency left out of his calculations as the one thing that *does* happen usually *is* out of the best-laid plans. The check was only momentary. Quickly he accepted it, and turned it swiftly into a complete victory. There was no time for hesitation. He ordered round the pony-carriage at once, at which the servant looked astonished, but obeyed nevertheless with exceeding speed; then sought Isabel, and told her to put on her hat and come with him; brought her out, put her in the carriage, and drove off with her without giving her any opportunity of choice or doubt, or any explanation whatever. Time enough for that on the way!

Prompt as he had been, he was only just in time. About a quarter of a mile from the house they met Lady Upton returning in her carriage; but, flushed with victory, Mr. Warfield was not to be so easily beaten in the hour of his triumph. He never paused, only bowed low as they whisked passed, and smiled inwardly at the face of wondering consternation that was turned on them. Her ladyship was simply aghast! and looked it! Her own daughter, in her own pony-carriage, driving alone with Mr. Warfield—without her knowledge even—and only a servant behind! She pulled the check-string sharply and suddenly, and her carriage stood still. She put her head out of the window and looked back, to see them rolling merrily away without a thought of stopping, not casting even a look behind!

She wouldn't shout after them, that would be *too* ludicrous; besides, it was very doubtful if they would hear her, supposing she *did* risk the absurdity; still more doubtful if they would *heed*. No, they were out of reach, clear off, let them be going whither they might!

As she recognised the fact she drew in her head and sank back on her seat, confounded;

saying, in a voice that was almost sepulchral—"Drive on!" and thinking—"O tempora, O mores!"—put into English, of course, and amplified during the remainder of her drive, and for hours afterwards; until, in fact, the truants returned, and Mr. Warfield confounded himself in excuses and apologies and reasons, which her ladyship accepted perforce,—what else could she do? But she mentally resolved that as it was the first, so it should be the last escapade he should ever have the chance of making! Come when he might, he shouldn't find her out *again*! And he didn't.

CHAPTER IX.

IT wanted a few minutes of the hour of four in the afternoon, and Oakbrook Farm lay basking in the sun, which shone upon it so bright and strong that its grey stone walls looked almost white. A garden in front, full of flowers and vegetables and fruit-trees, lay basking in it too; so did the wide fields, spreading round it on all sides; fields of delicate green corn, whose slender stalks stood motionless in the still air; fields of long yellow-brown grass, ready for the scythe; fields where the sweet, fresh hay was being tossed, and raked and played with in all manner of wonderful ways; fields where carts, and horses and men moved slowly along, picking up the fragrant heaps, and carrying them off to others, who built them into large, solid stacks; fields of green pasture, already a little faded with the heat, where cattle lay lazily

under the trees, peacefully chewing the cud;—all were bathed and steeped in sunshine;—and running amongst them, and dividing them into all manner of queer shapes—square, and three-cornered, and five-cornered, and oblong and zigzag—were thick, leafy hedges, whose green was half smothered under the sweet wild roses, pink and white, that grew over them, and clung to them lovingly;—all glowing in the burning sun, too. So was the road which wound through them, in and out, like a white thread, and led finally up to the farmer's house. All lay quiet under the hot sun in bright, still, summer beauty.

It was a fair and plenteous scene, full both of promise and performance; and Farmer Brown, who was toiling along this same road, as he stopped and turned to look at it, thought so; and thanked God in his heart.

It was late in the day for Farmer Brown; twelve hours already had he been up, and, save for meal times, all of them had been spent in good, honest work. A farmer he was, heart and soul, and looked it; you could never have taken him for anything else, and Farmer, or Farmer Brown, he was always called by all

who knew him,—it was a sort of title. He looked at his fields, and thanked God in his heart for blessing his toil; then turned and trudged on again sturdily in his thick shoes, coarse grey woollen stockings, and knee-breeches, with a queer sort of coat that he had thrown over his shirt when he left the field, and a broad-brimmed burnt straw hat; trudged on to the house to get his tea, for he was very fond of his tea, this big, burly farmer, and always had it comfortably in the house with his wife; it was his chief luxury.

As he reached the garden gate, he met his daughter and their servant coming out bringing the haymakers' afternoon meal; men, women, and children shared it—their drinkings, so called—great hunks of bread and cheese, and quarts of thin, light ale.

“Well, lasses, you're none too soon,” he said, “I hope t'missus hasn't stinted t'beer, for it's main hot, and t'lads have laid to wi' a will this day.”

“No, father,” answered his daughter, “Our Lizzy,”—“mother said as how she'd put a extra can in.”

“Bless her, she's a good heart, has t'missus!”

and the farmer went in at the little gate and through the garden,—the farm-yard was on the other side,—and entered the house through the open door.

It was a fair sight that met his eyes, as fair in its way as the one he left. Fresh, cool, delicious, the very ideal of homely comfort was this “house-place,” so it was called; it is the common name for such in those parts. A very suggestive one and appropriate; *the* place of the house, the family place, common to all, where all eat and drink, and talk and live. There was a parlour, carpeted, and furnished with stuffed chairs, but it was only entered to be cleaned, and on high days and holidays, and even then its habitation was more of an honour than a pleasure, and it was quitted thankfully; there was also a kitchen at the back, where the roughest and dirtiest work was done; but this was the real home, the house-place.

It was a large square room with whitened ceiling, yellow-washed walls, and stone floor, rubbed all round its edges with a soft, yellowish stone. The space in the middle was covered with a thick, warm carpet of many colours, closely mingled, giving a general warm, sober

hue; it was made of strips of all kinds of odds and ends of material sewed together and then woven into a carpet in some mysterious way that leaves little ends of stuff standing up all over its surface; a rug of the same kind lay before the fire which had sunk low in the large grate, guarded by an iron fender with a flat, barred top. The polished wooden chairs glittered again with brightness; so did the round, three-legged table, a little on one side of the fire; so did the old oak clock-case; so did the high cupboard with drawers underneath; so did the little corner cupboard; so did the delf-case, and its rows of shining plates and dishes; so, above all, did the brass candlesticks on the wide chimney-piece, and the tin pans and covers hung about it, and in sundry other places on the walls. There was a large old-fashioned sofa, too, with a checked blue cover, and a square white deal table against the side by the window, and on the broad window-ledge, a row of the brightest conceivable red pots, holding the brightest, freshest, healthiest plants you ever saw! A peculiar kind of dry, crisp oat-cake was arranged on a rack suspended from the ceiling in front of the fire; and further back, from hooks in the

rafters, hung huge sides of bacon, and proportionate hams.

On the round table tea was spread, ready. Besides the tray and crockery-ware there was a large plate of bread and butter, and loaf sugar, and milk, and plenty of rich, sweet cream,—for the farmer was well-to-do, and could afford it; the tea-pot stood on the hob to draw, and a plate of buttered tea-cakes and one of oat-cakes were on the fender keeping hot; the kettle sang on the turned-down bar of the grate; the big tortoise-shell cat, Mrs. Brown's pride, sat purring and blinking on the hearth; the clock ticked pleasantly; and Mrs. Brown herself, sitting waiting by the table, made merry music with her clicking needles, as she knitted rapidly one of the farmer's large, grey stockings.

A peaceful, happy English home! Lived in by people, who, whatever their shortcomings and want of conventional refinement, strove honestly to do their duty to God and to their neighbour. Thank God, there are still many such in our land, and it would be an evil day for England that should see them scattered abroad,—Lord Powerscourt's opinion notwithstanding.

The farmer had seen it so day by day for years, but somehow it struck him anew; he paused at the door and looked at it contentedly, and again thanked God in his heart.

"Well, Missus," he said, as he wiped his streaming face, "you're fine and cool here, it's a regular blazer out o' doors."

"Rub thy feet well, farmer," said his wife, as she put down her knitting and went to get the hot cakes off the fender, and the tea-pot off the hob,—“t' floor's just been cleaned up.”

"Aye, lass, thou'rt all'ays at it," he responded, while he *did* rub them well on the large mat,—how could I forget the mat? it was seldom, indeed, that anyone entered Mrs. Brown's house without being reminded of its existence. "Well, well," he continued, "it's happen better nor a dirty house-place; and there's all'ays summat i' this world."

"Aye, lad, there is," retorted she, "and if thou never gets nowt worse nor a clean house, thou'll not be badly off."

"Come now, missus, don't thee get on thy high horse," he said, with a smile, "I know that as well as thou can tell me; and I know as there isn't a missus in all t' country side as

can turn out a better baking, or a lighter batch o' cakes, or sweeter butter. So just sit thee down and gie me my tea, for I'm as dry as an oven."

Mrs. Brown, mollified by this praise, which she knew to be her due, sat down and poured out the tea, and they took it in silence; conversation at meals not being usual at Farmer Brown's, where they sat down to eat, not to talk; and acted accordingly.

The farmer had worked through several oat cakes and sundry slices of bread and butter, and was blowing in his saucer some of the tea from his third cup, when he lifted his head suddenly, and spilled it.

"Drat them electioneering fellows!" he cried, "they're after me again, as sure as fate! I hear t' sound o' wheels."

"Well, and if they are, it's nobody's fault but thy own," said his wife. "If thou'd tell 'em what thou means to do, they'd leave thee i' peace. I'd soon tell 'em if it was me, or if I knowed it!"

"Surely, lass, thou can't mean it?" and he laughed and chuckled—"but thou doesn't know, thou sees, and I'm not a going to tell

thee! What dost 'ee think I told Tom Buggins t' other day, when he'd lost his father's old watch upo' t' road, and he asked me if he should get t' bellman to cry it? 'Tell thy missus, lad,' says I, 'and say it's a secret, and thou'll ne'er need to pay t' bellman!'"

"Eh, farmer, but thou'rt a deep 'un!" said his wife, looking at him admiringly, "thou's not lost thy saucy ways yet, and it's my belief thou never will!"

"Eh, lass, God knows!" he answered: "we're all i' his hands, and what we have o' wisdom comes fro' him."

"Hey! but lookye farmer! it's a right pretty little carriage wi' two pownies, and it's stopping at t' garden gate;"—and the excited Mrs. Brown got up and went to the window—"and there's a young lady, and she's getting out,—farmer thou'rt *bound* to go and meet 'em!"

"Nay, missus, nay!" said the farmer, sticking to his tea, and not even raising his eyes; "it's nobbut another dodge."

"I tell thee it's the sweetest young lady I ever saw and she's coming up t' walk,—and thou that never turned one of God's creeturs from thy door yet, lord or beggar, thou sits

there like a stoop ! I can't abear it no longer ; if thou won't go, I will."

"Go, missus, go, if thou likes, I shan't budge for 'em. I tell thee it's nobbut another dodge."

Now if Mrs. Brown *had* a stronger point than cleanliness, it was hospitality ; and to see strangers come to her door unmet and un-greeted, was more than she could bear. She looked daggers at the farmer, and rushed out in time to meet Mr. Warfield and Isabel outside the house.

"How do you do, Miss?" she said : "I hope I see you well, sir ! Come in, if you please."

"How do you do, Mrs. Brown?" said Isabel, holding out her hand : "I know *you*, though you don't know *me* ; I am Sir Harry Upton's sister."

"Miss Upton ! then we're no strangers," replied Mrs. Brown, delighted ; "many's the time Sir Harry has told us about his sister ; a dear, free, young gentleman he is ! And the farmer 'll be main glad to see you, now. He wouldn't come out, because he said it was nobbut another dodge about that plaguy vote o' his that I'm sick to death of ; but he's out, for once !"

Isabel looked confused, and, standing still, glanced at Mr. Warfield, who smiled at her reassuringly; while Mrs. Brown stood, too, and looked at them both. Then Isabel laughed, and said:

"But it's quite true, Mrs. Brown, that I do want his vote for this gentleman, Mr. Warfield; so if he doesn't want to see us, we had better not go in."

Mrs. Brown's face had fallen considerably, but she answered, promptly:

"O yes, Miss, come in, *do*; but I wish"—

Isabel moved on again, saying:

"Well, if you *are* so kind, then;—perhaps you will help me to persuade the farmer?"

"I would, and welcome," she answered; "but it's no use trying; not a mite o' use. But come in Miss, come in."

"It's Miss Upton, farmer," she said, as they entered the house.

"My service to you, Miss," said the farmer, rising. "I hope Sir Harry has his health?"

"He's quite well, thank you." And—

"How do you do, farmer?" and Mr. Warfield held out his hand. "You know me, I think?"

"Yes, sir," said the farmer, shaking hands, but very coldly for him; for it *was* a dodge, clearly; "I hope I see you well,—won't you sit ye down?" And Mrs. Brown put forward a chair.

"Thank you," said Mr. Warfield; "but I should like to look in at that field they are cutting. I see you have got one of the new machines at work, and I want to look at one; so, as we have not much time, I think I will go down there, while Miss Upton talks to Mrs. Brown."

Did Mr. Warfield guess, I wonder, that the new machine was the farmer's weakest point; or was dame Fortune with him still? Whether or no, it was a decided hit. The farmer's whole figure relaxed, as he answered :

"Hey, sir! but it's worth looking at; it's a real beauty! And you'd never believe the work I had to get 'em to use it; for all it cuts so clean, as you'll see for yourself. And there's my boy, Jack, there, can tell you all about it, or, I'll e'en come mysen; I've well nigh done my tea."

"Not on any account, farmer," said Mr. Warfield; "don't think of such a thing. I know something about them already; and your son

will, no doubt, be able to explain anything I don't understand. If, however, you will kindly show Miss Upton the way down there, in case I should not have returned when she is ready to go, I shall be greatly obliged."

"I'll do it with the greatest of pleasure, sir," said the farmer.

"Then good bye, for the present, Isabel; and good afternoon, Mrs. Brown, if I shouldn't see you again. Oh no! don't come out with me; pray go on with your tea,—I am quite ashamed to have disturbed you."

"Not at all, sir; not at all," said Mrs. Brown, heartily, as he went his way; "it's a pleasure,"—and the farmer not sorry, after all, to finish his tea in peace, sat down again, and attacked another oat cake.

Isabel, who was standing, looking out of the window, gave Mr. Warfield a smile and a nod, as he looked at her when he turned to shut the garden gate. Then her eyes rested again on the smiling landscape, and she exclaimed:

"How very pretty it is!"

"I'm glad you like it, Miss," said Mrs. Brown; "most folks does think it pretty."

"O! it's beautiful! and the scent of the hay

is so delicious. And what quantities of lovely roses and sweet briar you have in your garden, Mrs. Brown; really, I think it's the very prettiest place!"

"Well, Miss," said the farmer, sensibly gratified,—we *have* a goodish few; it's waste o' ground, like, but t' missus likes 'em, and our 'Liza; so when I sees a fresh sort I gets it. But won't you sit ye down, Miss, and when t' missus has done her tea, she'll be proud to go and shew 'em to you,—if you like such like things."

"Do, Miss, come on to t' sofy," added Mrs. Brown.

"Thank you," said Isabel, turning towards them, and blushing; "but I should like a cup of your tea: Harry has told me so often about it, and the oat cakes. May I have some with you?"

"And welcome, Miss," said Mrs. Brown, nearly upsetting the table, in her haste to reach the cupboard for another cup, while the farmer rose and put a chair for her, and said:

"Hadn't you better toast another, missus; these here are well-nigh cold."

"Why, farmer, what do you take me for,"

answered she, indignantly; "in course I'll toast another. I nobbut wish I'd had t' best chiney out."

"O, don't do any more, please Mrs. Brown," said Isabel; "I'm sure these are very good; and I'm so sorry for you to have the trouble."

"It won't take not five minutes, Miss; just time for another cup o' tea to mash," replied Mrs. Brown, continuing her operations; "and as for trouble, don't speak o' such a thing!"

And she displaced the cat, and stirred the cinders from the bottom of the fire to make a clear, red place, and kneeled before it toasting the cake, while the farmer and Isabel sat one on each side of the round table; Mrs. Brown looked at the cake, Isabel looked at her and the cake, and the farmer looked at Isabel.

She had pleased him, and if she was very frank and friendly, why, so was Sir Harry, and it might be—"like brother, like sister;" still it was all very sudden; and then she had come with Mr. Warfield—most suspicious!

So he sat and looked at her under his eyebrows for about a minute, trying to read her face, then said, suddenly,—

"Is it only just now, as Sir Harry has told you about us, Miss?"

Isabel blushed as she turned to him, and said,—

"O, no! he has told me often and often, and I have longed to come and see you; but I never went anywhere. But now it is different, and I shall hope to come often, if you will let me."

"We shall ever be proud to see you, Miss, I'm sure," said Mrs. Brown, stealing a glance from her cake; but the farmer sat quiet, looking at her again, keenly. She met his eyes, and laughed, freely and merrily.

"Ah! you suspect me, I see, farmer," she said. "Well, you are quite right; I *have* come to ask you to vote for Mr Warfield; but it's quite true, too, that I liked to come, and that I like to be here."

He gave a sort of little grunt of satisfaction, and said,—

"All right, Miss, that's plain-speaking; there couldn't be plainer; and plain-speaking's what I like."

"Will you vote for him, then?—please do," she said.

"Ah! that's another thing altogether," he replied, grimly; "why should I vote for him?"

"O, because he's the best man!" she said, confidently; "so different from the other! Why, Mr. Brown, you know he is!"

"Stop a bit, Miss! stop a bit!" he answered. "'Fair and softly goes far in a day.' I don't know nowt o' t' sort, and if we *are* to talk about this darned vote, and we're a funny pair to do it!"—and he chuckled as he thought how little likely she looked to get over him, or anyone,—“there's summat as I should like to know afore we begin; may I ask you t' question, Miss?"

"As many questions as you like," she said; "but I don't know much, you know," and she laughed again, merrily.

But Mr. Brown's views were not political, not just then.

"Well, Miss," he said, "I don't mean no offence in course; but as you give me leave to ask t' question, what do *you* want my vote for? What have *you* got to do wi' it?"

This unexpected question discomposed her, and the colour rushed over neck and brow.

She hesitated a moment, then looked at him steadily, and said, quietly,—

“Mr. Warfield and I are going to be married.”

“Phew!” said the farmer, with a long whistle. “But you’re ower young, lass! you’re ower young! What’s your mother about? But happen it’s her doing? He’s got fine broad lands has that Mester Warfield; happen it’s not you, but her?”

“Oh, no!” said Isabel, “it is not mamma,—it’s nobody but me.”

“Then you’re sweethearts?”

The word fell strangely on Isabel’s ears, she had never thought of it as applied to herself; but, as the farmer said it, it was a beautiful word, a sweet, loving word; and she answered, with a smile,

“Yes, we are sweethearts.”

“He’s a lucky man, then, for he’s got a bonny lass; and you’re at right on’t to try to get him votes, or owt else he wants, as you *can* get.” And he looked at her across the table with a very different expression now; in a loving, fatherly way, that made her quite easy and bold.

"Ah, farmer!" she said, "if you only knew him as *I* do, I shouldn't need to ask you!"

"You think so?"

"I am *sure*," she said; "he is so good, and so kind, and knows so much! *I* don't pretend to understand politics, of course; but I know *he* does; and he's so different from that funny Mr. Bunton!"

"Now, Miss," said Mrs. Brown, bustling to the table, "here's a cake hissing hot, and a cup of fresh tea, don't ye bother talking to t' farmer, nobody can't make *him* hear sense if he's not that ways inclined; but just tak a bit o' oat-cake, you'll ne'er have a better!"

Isabel had longed for the wonderful oat-cake many and many a time, as she said; and for the tea out of the little black tea-pot; and she found them most excellent after her hot drive. She laughed, and smiled and chattered with Mrs. Brown about her flowers and poultry and bees in sheer gaiety of heart, to the temporary exclusion of the vote even from her mind, while the farmer watched her, a little doubtfully again, at first, afterwards with a gentle, superior smile. He was satisfied. "It's real," he thought; "there's no sham about it,

she's like her brother; and he's got his faults, has Sir Harry; but he's downright real!" And as she continued to talk on happily to Mrs. Brown, she made more and more way with the farmer; wisdom expressed by eloquence would not have gone half so far, for, rough as his outside was, he had a tender heart, that loved his missus, and he liked those that liked her.

Isabel had nearly finished her tea before he spoke again.

"Do you know widow Wilson, Miss?" he said.

Luckily Mr. Warfield had been too wise to give her any hint.

"No," she answered; "why?"

"Nothing much, only she's lived tenant under Mester Warfield and his father thirty year and more, and never missed her rent-day, and her father did t' same afore her; and now she's threatened to be turned out for t' reason that her son's turned Chartist, and won't gie his vote for Mester Warfield. T' farm's i' *his* name sure enough, but it's rightly hers, not his'n."

"O, Mr. Brown!" she said, "what a shame! But there must be some mistake, I think; it

can't be true. If it really *is*, it is not Mr. Warfield's doing,—*he* doesn't know, I'm sure. He would never allow such a thing. Poor woman! I will go and tell him directly!" and she got up.

"Nay, sit ye down again and finish your tea," said the farmer smiling, "there's no such hurry. But if you'll have t' goodness to tell him on it when you *do* see him, I'll thank you; for she's pinched and starved t' year round to keep t' owd place for her son, and it seems hard on her. I don't say but what if it was her husband, there'd be sense in it, for what can a man do again his missus?" and he gave a comical glance towards Mrs. Brown, "but you see, it's nobbut her son, and them young chaps thinks a deal too much o' theirsens to take much heed to t' womenfolk; if it ben't some slip of a lass what's a bigger fool nor them!"

"Of course she can't make him," said Isabel, smiling, "anybody must know that!" and she thought of Harry, "and if she could, it wouldn't be right to threaten her. It's a shame she should have been troubled so, but Mr. Warfield will soon put it right."

"You think he will Miss?"

"O, I'm quite sure of it; so sure, that I will

promise for him if you like," she said, with a blush at her own boldness, but then she *was* sure, *quite*.

"Well, then, Miss," said the farmer, "if widow Wilson keeps her farm i' peace—" his wife and Isabel bent eagerly towards him—he paused and laughed,—“nay,” he said, “you’ve gone and spoiled it; I said as I wouldn’t promise my vote, and I won’t;”—they drew back, looking disappointed,—“but,” he continued, with a wink, “if there’s any little thing as I can do to oblige Miss Upton, why—she may reckon it done.”

“O, farmer, thank you!” said Isabel, as she jumped up and shook hands with him, “you don’t know how glad I am.”

“Softly, Miss, softly,” he said, while he shook hands heartily; “don’t forget as I haven’t said who I’ll vote for.”

“Oh, no!” she said, laughing gleefully, “I won’t forget it,—*nor* that you will oblige me! May I ask you to do something more for me?”

“And welcome, Miss; if I can do it, it’s done. For your own sake, no other; for you’re a bonny lass and a true.”

"Thank you, Mr. Brown; then will you speak at the meeting to-morrow, to oblige me?"

"Nay, now, Miss," and his face expanded into a broad grin, "do *I* look a proper sort o' chap to speechify among t' gentry? What should the likes o' *me* have to say?"

"Ah! you can say a great deal if you like, I am sure," she said, "only, don't forget, Mr. Warfield is my sweetheart!" and she laughed and blushed together, and then went to the window and looked out.

The farmer and his wife followed her with their eyes; then smiled fondly at each other, as recollections of other days swept over them—days when she was slim and fair, and he—half his present weight.

"Aye," he said to her, in a low voice, "it's sweet for sure, but thou'rt more to me now, wife."

And tears mingled with her smiles as she answered,—

"Aye, John, there's our two bairns in heaven." And then she looked again towards Isabel and said, still in the same hushed tone, "Tak her to t' field, John, she wants to go."

He got up and went to the window.

"I'm goin to t' field to Mester Warfield, Miss," he said, "happen you'd like to go, too,—it's rare and sweet among t' grass; or will you stop wi' t' missus?"

"O, I will go, please; I do so love to be amongst the hay; but won't Mrs. Brown show me her roses first?"

"Come, missus," said the farmer,—“and bring thy shears.”

"Eh! farmer, but thou'rt daft this day," said his wife, "or else thou thinks as I am."

And the three went out together among the roses, and Mrs. Brown cut lavishly her most precious buds, while the farmer, little thinking, poor deluded man! how thoroughly he had been *done*, looked on smiling; and Isabel, equally unconscious, took every fresh one with delight, though begging that no more might be gathered.

When they got to the gate, Isabel said good-bye to Mrs. Brown, who stayed there, while she and the farmer went out. The carriage was there, and she said,—

"Could you drive me to the field, Mr. Brown?"

for I had a very long walk this morning and am very tired."

The farmer positively beamed with pleasure.

"Surely, Miss, if you'll trust me," he said.

So she got into the low pony carriage, and was followed by Mr. Brown, who drove off in wonderful style under the admiring eyes of his wife, still leaning over the gate; and to the amazement and horror of the smart footman who sat behind.

"A common farmer!" he thought; "*me* behind a common farmer!" And he crossed his arms with more than usual rigidity, and threw back his head to the very verge of dislocation.

Never, perhaps, did so short a drive hold so much of triumph. Every labourer they passed looked up in wonder, as he touched his hat, and saw the well-known farmer, and the young lady and the carriage. Surely Farmer Brown was a proud and happy man that day! The best whip in England could not have brought up his ponies in better style at the field-gate; nor the lord-lieutenant in person have helped Miss Upton to alight with a grander air; nor have walked by her side with more courteous deference: he was utterly captivated, delighted, enchanted.

They found Mr. Warfield talking eagerly to Jack, the farmer's son, as he examined the machine with the real interest of a man who knew his subject.

"It works splendidly, farmer," he said, as they approached; "I shall order one like it for my farm."

Isabel, leaving no time for a reply, cried:

"O, Mr. Warfield! Mr. Brown has told me such a shameful thing! Some one has told widow Wilson that you will turn her out of her farm if her son doesn't vote for you, and she can't make him, you know. Who *can* have said such a cruel thing?"

The farmer was captivated by Isabel, not by Mr. Warfield, and he stood and watched them with keen, grey eyes; but Mr. Warfield was prepared, perfect in his part, and he learned nothing.

"Not I, certainly," was the ready answer; "I will see that it is put right immediately. Her son may vote double yellow if he can, and she shall not be disturbed. Why, she has lived there ever since I can remember!"

"Honour! Mr. Warfield?" said the farmer.

Mr. Warfield looked at him with a faint expression of surprise in his face.

"Certainly," he said. "Why not?"

"Then, sir, I've done you a wrong," replied the farmer. "No man can't be called on to stand to what all t' fools under him do. Didn't Bill Sykes leave all t' hay spread in t' five acre, nobbut last week, when I'd told him as there was a storm coming as sure as fate? And he threeped me down there worn't, and left it to get sopped. I've done you a wrong, sir; and that thundering dunderhead *shall* give you his vote, or I'll know t' reason why! A nice chap *he* is, to set hissen up for knowing better nor his betters!"

Mr. Warfield looked grave.

"Your advice may, undoubtedly be useful to him, farmer," he said; "but don't attempt to force him in any way. He can't hurt his mother; she shall have the farm for her life,—however he may vote; and I don't think he can hurt me; I have too many good friends." And he smiled.

"You're a real gentleman, sir," said the abused farmer; "one of t' owd school, that 'ud

give a poor man summat for his vote, sure enough,—and why not? It helps him, and doesn't hurt you; but wouldn't punish him for being born a fool, and not able to see which side his bread was buttered on." The farmer pulled himself up short, then continued: "But don't yo' mistake me, sir,—I haven't said as I'd vote for you. I said I wouldn't promise nobody; and I haven't."

"Quite right, farmer," replied Mr. Warfield; "every man should vote according to his convictions; but I *may* say, that I hope yours will be on my side."

"And you have promised me to speak, to-morrow, you know," said Isabel.

"Surely, Miss; and when I does say a thing, I sticks to it; as you'll hear, if you're there."

"Oh, I shall be there," she said; "at the White Horse. I shall hear every word of it."

"All right, Miss; I shan't forget as you're there;" he stooped, and added, confidentially: "nor I won't forget as he's your sweetheart, neither!"

"Thank you," said Isabel, with a bright smile, "I know you won't, and I am *so* much obliged to you. But I must say good-bye,

now, we shall be *so* late." And she held out her hand to the farmer, who took it and shook it, and pledged himself inwardly to the most unheard of extent.

"Well, little lady," said Mr. Warfield, as he touched the off pony with the whip, "you have gained the day, as I knew you would;—the day and the election."

"O, Mr. Warfield, how you exaggerate my doings," she answered, with a laugh. "I do believe I *have* gained Mr. Brown, but what is *one*?"

"In this instance, everything," he replied. "I assure you, Lord Powerscourt doubted my return only this morning. '*If* you can gain Brown, you are safe,' was the cry, '*only*, you *can't* gain Brown.' Now, somebody *has* gained Brown, and I *am* safe."

"But I don't understand, one man! the election to hang on *one* man!"

"But *this* man is not one, he is a host. He serves as oracle, it seems, to a number of these little farmers; and which way soever *he* may lead, *they* will follow."

"Indeed! I didn't know; but, then, how glad I am that I asked him to speak! It

occurred to me that he might be of use, for I knew he would speak for you, but I had no idea he could do so much. I really have done something for you to-day, then! something worth having;—better than rosettes?”

“My darling, you have done—wonders! What the Committee, individually and collectively failed to do, and advised me not to try. For once, at least, in this world, ‘pure innocence’ has prevailed; and after all our work, and all our talk, and stir, and bustle, it is the little lady who has walked in quietly at the last and gained the day;—and I like it to be so.”

“Then, I am glad.”

Swiftly sped the ponies, happily beat the hearts, softly beamed the eyes,—ah! but it was a fair world! who could ever have thought otherwise?

CHAPTER X.

ON the morning after Isabel's visit to Farmer Brown, three days only before the election, the inhabitants of Bransford and its neighbourhood were assembled in public meeting. Electors, enlightened and otherwise; non-electors; nearly the whole male population, in fact, for miles around, from the slouching lad of fifteen, to the shaky sexagenarian, formed a great multitude which swarmed tumultuously in the market-place, and overflowed into the streets and alleys that opened off it.

At the top of the square was a raised platform, holding a few seats; and here were the Mayor, most of Mr. Warfield's Central Committee, Mr. Warfield himself, and a few Buntonites.

The Mayor opened the proceedings. As he rose to speak, there was a swaying, surging

motion in the crowd, like a wave of the sea, then a hush.

"Gentlemen," he said, "as the terrible storm prevented the Meeting which had been arranged for last week, I have been requested to call this to-day, to give you an opportunity of hearing Mr. Warfield's opinions, and asking him any questions you may think proper.

"Other gentlemen may afterwards address the Meeting, and I beg of you to give to all a fair and impartial hearing.

"Mr. Warfield, I now call upon you, Sir."

Mr. Warfield rose, and was greeted by loud cheers mixed with hisses, then louder cheers; and could not, at first, make himself heard. He stood there, waiting; calm, strong, and powerful; with his head thrown slightly back, and a smile upon his face; a natural, born ruler and master.

He raised his hand, and held it open with a gesture of command, and the tumult slackened, wavered, fell: there was silence.

Then he dropped the hand, and spoke.

"Gentlemen," he said, "friends and neighbours—as many of you are, I wish to speak to you; you, I am told, wish to hear; then listen.

Many of you have come some weary miles to be present here; would it be sensible to go away no wiser, as to what I think and mean, than you came? Wouldn't it be rather a soft touch for Yorkshire lads?"

"Aye, aye, Mester Warfield, *ower* soft," cried a sturdy farmer in the front ranks, "we're not bahn to be such ninnies. I'll hearken to what ye say, sir, whether I likes it or whether I doesn't:—and them as is near me had better do t' same!"

There was a general laugh, that spread through the crowd, and many voices cried, "Go on, Mester Warfield, I'm like t' farmer, I'll hearken, I promise ye; and them as is near me had better."

"Thank you!" said Mr. Warfield, "you promise to listen to me, promise more,—to listen to me like friends; and when I get to the end of my speech, if there is anything you don't understand, anything you would like to ask,—ask, and I will answer. That is my promise. Is it a bargain?"

And the multitude, as with one voice, answered, "Done."

"Well then, friends," he said, "I will tell

you in a few words what I think you want to know, for I am not going to trouble you with a long speech ; I shall not try your patience much in that way, I assure you. I need not tell you that I am a Tory, you all know *that* ; I need not tell you what a Tory is, a man who loves his queen, and church, and country, and would keep them as his fathers left them, glorious and happy ; —you all know *that*. But there are men going about now with new-fangled notions, saying that all the old things are mistakes, and they have found out a new way, the way to make everything all right for evermore ; they talk of Liberty, and Equality, and Fraternity, or, The rights of Man ; little work, high wages, cheap bread ; every man is to be master, and not a Jack is to be found in all the land !

“ Now, I am going to tell you what I think about this. It sounds pleasant, very ; it makes a pretty picture, and perhaps some of you are inclined to believe it, and think the Tories are poor, old fellows, who have had their day,—useful once, a long time ago ;—now behind the age, and good for nothing but to sit in the chimney-corner. I tell you, no ! A thousand times, no ! What is it, this Liberty, Equality,

and Fraternity? Liberty!—to 'do evil!
Equality!—of baseness! Fraternity!—of
fools!

“Liberty!—of the strong over the weak, that
takes away the law, takes away justice, and
right, and truth, and leaves the strong man free,
—to work his will; leaves the weak also free,
—to go to the wall!

“Equality!—that to make all men equal
pulls down every high and noble thing, and
leaves no room for great deeds of sacrifice, and
loving help from man to man; that would make
of the whole world one dull, dead plain, without
a mountain or a valley;—not even *one* little
hollow for shade and rest!

“Fraternity!—that says, ‘Thou art my
brother—therefore what is thine is mine,’—and
takes it!”

“A clever chap that there,” said a voice,
“but I’m thinking he’ll get into t’ prison.”

“*Now*, he would,” said Mr. Warfield smiling,
“while we Tories have our way, but he wouldn’t
if he got his own way. He has been tried.
They tried him in France, him and the other
two—Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. And
what think you came of it? All the fine things

they promise you now? Peace, and Plenty and Content? No. Misery came of it, and licensed Murder; Hunger, and seas of Blood. They shut up the churches, and said there was no God. They were their own gods, and worked their will. The streets ran with blood, and women danced in it. Children and grey-haired men, young men and maidens, wives, mothers, fathers, were beaten, and outraged, and killed in dozens like dogs, if they did not serve the new gods—or if the gods thought so. There was neither mercy, nor justice, nor pity in all the land.

“Is *this* what you want? Will you support the men that would make England like to this? Not that they *say* so, not that they *think* so. Some, who know all this, have given the Evil Three new names, and expect new things from them; some keep to the old ones; but call them how they will, what they were, *that* they are, and what they can do we have seen.”

“Hear, hear!” and loud cheers, mingled with cries of “Them’s not t’ chaps for us!” “We don’t want no furrineering ways,” “We won’t have nowt what ’ll harm t’ women and babbies,” “Down wi’ ’Quality and all t’ lot on ’em!”

“But this, though true, is not what they say of themselves, it is what I say of them. Let us, then, come to what they *do* say of themselves,—let us look at the account they give of their own doings.

“What have they done? What do they promise to do?

“They have given you the cheap loaf;—and, by letting in foreign wheat duty free, made *yours* so cheap, that you get less money to buy the loaf with. Say, for example, that you got it for a shilling and now you get it for sixpence, what good is that to you if you have but the sixpence to buy it with? Are you better off for that? No, you are where you were. But, I say, it has *not* left you where you were; no, it has done worse. It has ruined many a poor farmer and left him *without* bread, him and his children, to go to the parish or starve, and not a few have chosen to starve—as you know, and I know.

“Is there much good in that?”

“No, there ben’t.” “No, no, no.”

“They promise you short hours of labour. Short work means short wages—you can’t make a man give a penny for less than a

penny's worth, and if you could he would soon have no pennies to give,—and short wages mean an empty larder and a cold hearth. What will the missusses say, do you suppose, when their children are crying round them for bread, and you tell them, to comfort them, that you have had two hours less work and have come home to enjoy yourselves? Do you think you will?"

"Oi'd sooner go upo' t' treadmill reight off, nor face *my* missus wi' such a tale!" said a big collier, earnestly; who, though he hadn't a vote, had a voice,—like many another! "Aye lad, and thou'd foind it t' best o' t' two!" said another, and again the laugh went through the crowd.

"Then you are all to be free and equal,—*so* equal, that drunken Bob (a well-known character in Bransford) will have as much to say in the government of the country as the parson, or the lawyer, as *I*, or any other man. Don't you think matters will be well managed then? There are men, you *know* there are, whom you would not trust with the care of a pig or a donkey; but they *are* to be trusted to

govern you and your children—they are good enough for *that!*”

“No, they ben’t; and we won’t have ’em, not none on ’em!”

“Then this same freedom is of a queer sort. You are to be free, and you are not to be free. They are so good to you—some of them—that they will kindly take care of you, and not let you have the *chance* of hurting yourselves; they will shut up the public-houses, and you shan’t have a pot of beer, not a man of you.”

Here there was a universal groan; the Buntonites themselves could not stand *that* idea, and joined their neighbours in hearty reprobation of it.

“Some of these things won’t seem to touch most of *you* who can vote for me; but so much that is not true has been said and written lately about them, that I could not resist telling you the truth, all of you, as I know it and believe it, when I had the opportunity. Don’t mistake me; I, too, think freedom, liberty, the greatest good on earth, and I say you *have* it,—you have it, and these men would take it from you. Live honestly, and obey the laws, and none can harm

you, none lay a finger on you,—not the Queen herself; you are safe, then, and you are free,—free to work the time you think right,—free to take the wages you think right,—as much as you can get, that is, I suppose.”

“Aye, lad, and so would thou!” said a voice amid the laughter.

“Well, I don’t say I shouldn’t,” and he smiled, “and I *do* say you are free to do it, and free, too, to drink your pot of beer that you have honestly earned, by your own fireside or with a neighbour at the public-house. I say you *are* free, and I want you to keep so.

“Now, my friends, consider and choose; which will you have to rule over you? The men who will meddle with your work and your beer, and make your corn sell for next to nothing; who will give as much power to the most ignorant as to the wisest,—or will you have *us*, your old, tried friends, who have helped to make England what she is, and who would keep her what she is, a queen among nations? Will you have a stranger, a man who knows nothing of the country, whose time has been passed in a counting-house or a mill,—honourably and usefully passed, no

doubt,—but who cannot know your wants and wishes, who has had no time to study the affairs of the state and of other nations,—a stranger to you and to all he would undertake,—or, will you choose me; unworthy, I know, of the great honour and trust, but still a man who has lived among you all his life, who has spent most of that life, since manhood, in studying, and thinking and writing on our history and government,—our wants and our duties?” (Loud cheers and some few hisses).

“Gentlemen,” raising his hand again for an instant, “one moment—you have been patient—one moment more, and I have done. I venture to hope you will return me, and I promise that if you do so, I will do my best—*not* that the poor should cease out of the land,—that is God’s word, and man cannot undo it;—*not* that we may be all equal,—God puts us in our appointed places, and all such striving is vain;—but, that we may all live in true liberty and peace, as we do now. And if changes seem desirable for the good of any of us, I will try that they shall be made carefully and thoughtfully, so as to benefit some and injure none. I will, in short, uphold our gracious Queen, our

holy Church, and our glorious Constitution,—the bulwark of our liberties, and the envy and admiration of the world!”

And Mr. Warfield turned his head slightly and gave one quick glance towards a window in the inn, then sat down, amid loud cheers, and hisses, and cries of “Gammon!”—“Don’t ye wish!”—“It’s all my eye!”—and sundry other telling witticisms, which are usually something very different from wit. He sat down with a calm, smiling face, that all the hubbub moved not one whit.

“Now,” said the Mayor, “if any gentleman wishes to ask questions, let him do so.”

“*Oi* does.”

“Hullo! it’s Tim Shunter! Put him up. Hurrah for Tim!”

“Howd yer row, and leave me alone,” said Tim, struggling vigorously *not* to be put up; “I can speak where I am, and I’m going to.”

“Mester Warfield, what do ye say about tea and sugar, sir?” said Tim.

Now, tea and sugar was a difficult subject; it had been well handled, and had made a great impression on all the farmers’ dames, and all

the other dames. Mr. Warfield would rather not have answered, but there stood Tim, and all the great, heaving crowd, listening.

"I say they are two very good things, Tim."

"Aye, aye, sir! and so do Oi, and so does my missus, and we want more on 'em. Will you' get t' duty off, and mak' 'em cheaper?"

"No, Tim, because it would be so far like the loaf, that it would do more harm than good."

"Eh, well! I'm main sorry, then, for Oi loiked what yo' said about 'ternity and blood and things—it wor grand! but if yo' won't gie us cheap tea an' sugar, Oi mun go for him as will!"

"Who *says* he will, Tim," answered Mr. Warfield. "I don't think he can; and for your sake, and many another, I *hope* he can't."

"Well, sir, happen yo' know best, but my missus—"

"O, bother thy missus!" cried a voice, "if thou's nowt better to say, shut up."

"Let Tim say what he likes, I beg of you," said Mr. Warfield.

"Thank yo', sir," said Tim, "there's nowt

beside. I'm main sorry, but it can't be helped."

"Will yo' pay t' National Debt?" said another questioner.

"Not this week, my friend, nor this year," replied Mr. Warfield, laughing. "If you want to do that, you must pay twice as much duty on tea and sugar, and everything else; and then your life wouldn't see it done!"

"By jingo! then it's a stunner! T'other chap talked as if it wor as easy as 'thank yo'!'"

"So it is—in talk! I will do my best about the debt as about all other things; I will act to the best of my judgment; but if I talked of paying it, I should be a fool, or worse."

"Well sir, Oi'm sorry for it, for Oi loikes things honest, and it can't be honest to owe a great lump o' money 'at you can't pay no-how."

"Ah! there I *can* help you. It *is* honest; for the people to whom it is owing don't want to be paid, and other people try to buy shares of it, and do buy them every day, because they are sure it is quite honest, and they will get the interest as regularly as the clock."

"That's not t' way as Oi heerd it," he said, looking doubtful.

"It is the truth, though," replied Mr. Warfield. "I tell it you as one honest man to another honest man,—and I say it is honest."

"An' Oi believe yo' t' same, sir; and Oi say it's a shame to go a bamboozling folks like that, an' making 'em mak' asses o' theirsens; they may fish for my vote!"

"Anything else, farmer?"

"No, sir; thank yo' kindly all t' same; but Oi've had enough on't, an' Oi think as how Oi be for *you*, for I hates to be done; but Oi should loike to have a word wi' Farmer Brown afore Oi says any more."

Then arose numerous cries of "Farmer Brown!—Farmer Brown! Let's *all* hear t' farmer!"—and Farmer Brown was pushed and hustled and incited to get to the front, and then pushed and hauled, and lifted bodily on to the platform, where he stood a minute or two panting and wiping his face before he attempted to speak; then he began,—

"Well, gentlemen, and Yorkshire lads, I reckon you're astonished above a bit to see the

loikes o' me stuck up here, and yo'll happen throw it i' my teeth, as I all'ays says, 'Every man to his trade;' and speechifying ben't mine, surely; but I'd been told afore as some on yo', I mean yo' lads (I don't set 'up to teach t' gentlefolks their own trade, not so soft as all that!) but I wor told as yo' wanted to know my idees about this election business, and now, as so many on yo' hollers out for me, why here I be. I all'ays gied a neighbour a lift when I'd t' chance, even if it did tak' me a bit out o' my road, and it seems to me t' same sort o' thing to gie yo' what help I can to t' understanding o' matters, tho' like enough I don't understand 'em ower well mysen."

"Yea, thou does!" "Thour't chap for seeing into a millstone!" "Hurra for Farmer Brown!" were mingled with ironical cries of "t' farmer turned teacher!" "Souse in man, don't be nesh!" "Out wi' it, or happen thou'll burst!"

The farmer stood still, with a grim smile.

"It's what thou'll ne'er do, Dick Ellis," he said; "for all that's i' *thy* head, it's safe enough."

The crowd laughed. "Thou's got it, Dick!" cried one. "Put that i' thy pipe, and smook it," said another; "and thou'd best leave t' farmer alone," added a third.

"And *thou'd* best leave *me* alone," said Dick, sulkily.

"Well, lads, to begin at t' beginning," continued the farmer,— "Yo've heerd what Mester Warfield—"

Here he was stopped by a storm of shouts, and groans and cries from the Buntonites, who took the name as a signal for attack. He tried to make himself heard—in vain—till all at once he singled out a particular man, a sort of leader, and shouted at the very top of his voice, "Joe Mills!"

There was a lull, and he seized it instantly.

"Thou wast all'ays a good 'un tō roar, Joe," he said. "Dost thou remember that day t' bull wor after thee? Eh, lads! if yo' had but heerd him roar *then*; and see'd him run wi' a face like a dishclout, and gie one big jump into t' middle o' t' muck heap!—*this* is nowt to it!" And he stood and laughed at the recollection; and they laughed with him. Then he went

on: "He's a brave lad, is Joe,—when he's upo' t' right side o' t' hedge!"

Fresh laughter greeted this, and Joe slunk behind big Ben.

"Thou *had* summat to roar at then," said the farmer; "but what art o' roaring at now? What are ony on yo' a roaring at? There's ne'er a mother's son on yo' as knows,—not if you're twice t' clever chaps as I take yo' for. Just shut your mouths and open your ears, and see what God 'll send you! You'll learn summat,—if it's nobbut which on yo's to roar at me, and which is'nt; for yo' don't know, now. And, lads," he added, with a sudden change of tone, "you're true Yorkshire blades; and fair play's a jewel. I'm one o' yerselves,—bred, born, and reared. Listen to me fairly; hear me out, and then bawl and roar yersens black if yo' like; or stand up, ony on you,—man to man,—and shew me I'm a fool, if yo' can; and I'll hearken to ye!"

"We will, lad; we will." "Fire away."
"Hear to t' farmer; he's a knowing file."

"Well, then; to begin at t' beginning,—"

"Thou did begin afore."

"Howd thy jaw, Bob," shouted several

voices, and sundry grimy hands were stretched to seize the offender. Bransford was manufacturing as well as agricultural.

“Yo’ all know as t’ seat i’ Parliament for this here Riding is empty, and there’s two as wants to fill it. We’ve got t’ pick on ’em, and can take that ’un as we think is t’ best fit for t’ place. They call theirsens our sarvants; it isn’t often as we’ve t’ chance o’ picking a gentleman; so, meaning no offence, let’s look at it like that, and see which ’ll sarve us t’ best. One’s Blue, and one’s Yellow; one’s a decent body enough, t’ other’s a gentleman; one’s a stranger, t’ other’s a neighbour. Neither of ’em’s been in a place afore; but they’ve both got good characters. Which shall we have?—that’s t’ question.” Here arose mingled cries of “Bunton” and “Warfield.” The farmer held up his hand. “Listen, yet, lads,” he said; “there’s more to come. You’ve heerd what foine things Mester Warfield has been a saying on, but ‘fine words butter no parsnips;’ and I don’t look for it to come true,—nor the half of it. We’ve heerd them same fine things again and again; and when t’ election wor o’er, things all’ays went on pretty much t’ same as

they did afore. And I don't mak' much count o' t' Blues: I've voted blue all my life, and I don't see as they ever did me much good, or anybody else but theirsens!" Hear, hear, hear! from the Yellows.

"They don't think much on a poor man, nobbut when they wants his vote. They gets howd o' t' good things, and then—they keeps 'em." A general laugh greeted this; and some of Mr. Warfield's committee began to fidget and look uneasy, notwithstanding the assurances they had received. "It's a rare tug to get a penny out on 'em," the farmer went on, "even for t' fatherless children and widows: they've got stony hearts up i' them high places." He paused, and looked round deliberately, amid perfect silence, then said: "But, if t' Blues is stony, t' Yellows is stonier; if *they* holds on tight, t' Yellows sticks tighter; if it's main hard to get a penny out o' *them*, you'd get ne'er a brass farden out o' t' others. Liberals they call theirsens, and talks o' liberty and equality. Why, they're the stingiest, stuck-up beggars o' horseback as ever rode to t' devil!"

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah for t' farmer."

"Pitch into 'em, lad!" "Gie it 'em, reight and left!"

"I'd gie it thee, lad, if I had howd on thee," said he; then continued: "My Lord," and he looked towards Lord Powerscourt on the platform, "or any gentleman as *is* a gentleman,—one o' t' real owd stock, if he meets me, 'll gie a shake o' th' hand, and say, 'Good morning, farmer; how's t' turnips, or t' wheat, or t' woats, and he'll know what he's a talking on. An' my lady 'll be t' same to my missus, or yourn, and ask after t' baby, and happen, sit and rest her i' t' houseplace, as easy if she wor at home. But if I meets one o' your new, fine Liberals, lor! he howds up his head and gies it a little jerk, and says: 'Ah! Brown, that's you, is it? How are yo'?' miles up above me!"

"Reight, farmer, reight yo' be," sounded all round, mingled with laughter; "that's just them!"—"He wouldn't shake hands; lor bless ye! he'd be afeard as they'd tak' me for a cousin, or summat. And he don't know a turmit from a tatur,—not till it's boiled!"—"Reight again, lad!" and more laughter. "An' it's t' same wi' his missus; she rustles her silks,

and shakes her feathers, and stares at my missus as if she was one o' t' wild beastesses; and there's ne'er a chair in t' house as would be good enough for *her* to sit on,—not even t' sofy!" And he paused, out of breath. Then, "Now, lads, ben't it true?" he said.

The relieved committee applauded heartily, while they laughed; everybody laughed but the farmer, who was far too much in earnest for mirth.

"True as t' Gospel," shouted more than one voice. "There's nowt loike t' real quality for manners, and making yo' feel at home, like," said another.

"There, you've hit t' reight nail upo' t' head, Sam Johnson;" the farmer proceeded, "for it's t' manners that mak t' man, t' outside of him, onyway, and it's nobbut fro' t' outside as yo' can guess what's in. Look at t' manners, you've had t' chance;—and pick your man accordingly."

Mingled groans, hisses and cheers met this, for there was no mistaking it; not the rawest ploughboy there but knew where the manners lay.

“Fair play!” shouted the farmer, “I’ve not done yet.”

“Hear him out.” “We won’t.” “Shut up!” “Go on!” “Fire away, owd boy!” and fifty other exclamations made a perfect tumult.

“Fair play!” again shouted Mr. Brown. “I shall soon have done, then you come on. Hearken, I say,” he shouted still louder, as the hubbub grew, “or I’ll say you’re sneaking curs ’at fear to hear t’ truth from a honest man—and no true Yorkshire lads.”

A sudden silence fell, and a voice shouted, “We’re not afeard o’ t’ truth, nor thee nother!”

“Hear it, then, like men; and don’t holler like brute beasts.”

“Brute beastesses thysen,” growled the voice, but the farmer heeded it not, he went on;—

“‘Every man to his trade.’ If I wanted a field ploughed, should I fetch t’ cobbler? If I wanted a horse shod, should I send him to t’ tailor?”

“Not if thee hadn’t lost thy wits, owd chap.”

“Then thee keep thine! and if thou wants cotton, go to t’ cotton spinner and buy it,—though happen thou’s got plenty without; (a laugh) and if thou wants a man to do t’ business o’ t’ country, to manage t’ nation and preserve t’ Constitution, and look arter thy bit o’ interest in all t’ hurly burly; go to t’ man as has been brought up to it, as knows his trade, to t’ real owd English gentleman,—as lives among us, and knows us, and what we mean, and what we want, as ’ll do us credit i’ t’ Parliament House, and is fit to live i’ palaces, and stand afore kings!”

For one second, the farmer stood amid perfect silence, slightly astonished at his own peroration, then he shouted, “Now, lads, altogether, Hurrah for Warfield, t’ real owd English gentleman, and three times three!”

The touch was electrical, and made itself felt through the whole mass; there had been a good deal of shouting already that day, but it was all as nothing to this. “Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!”—again—and yet again—it was deafening, astounding, tremendous; the groans and hisses were nowhere, and, feeling their insigni-

ficance, gradually died out. The farmer had made a great success, and carried not only his own particular admirers, but many another; of politics, they mostly knew little, and cared less, and all the writing and talking with which they had been favoured had but puzzled them more, and interested them not at all; but this came home to them—"gentleman *versus* vulgarian," and "every man to his trade;" they felt it, they understood it, they acted on it, and it did more for the Tory cause, in Bransford, than would have been effected by a speech from the Prime Minister in person,—infinitely more; and for many a long day did many an unhappy Whig canvasser, seeking votes for some enriched calico manufacturer, or magnificent ironmaster, find all his arguments, and promises, and eloquence, met with a stolid face of self-satisfaction, and answered by a chuckle, and the impregnable rejoinder, "every man to his trade!"—till he was ready to flee at the very sound of it, and wished in his heart that its original author had never been born!

As soon as there was a little lull, Mr. Warfield got up, and grasped the farmer's hand

and shook it heartily. "Thank you, farmer," he said, "thank you; why, you are worth a host!"

"Nay, Sir," he said, "you've no call to thank me, I nobbut told 'em my mind." But he was very beaming, was the farmer, and just a little shy, and he wondered to himself what his missus would have thought if she had heard him; and then he looked up to the Inn, and gave a little shame-faced nod to a face he saw there, and the face answered with the brightest of smiles, and he felt still more beaming and less shy; and sat down on a chair placed for him, one of the best pleased farmers in all England.

"Would any other gentleman wish to address the Meeting, or ask any further questions of the candidate?" said the Mayor.

It appeared that one or two gentlemen *would*, and they tried to struggle to the front,—but the Meeting had had enough, and would not hear of it; they were jostled, and pushed, and cuffed back, amid a storm of cries, among which might be discriminated, "No, no, no!" "No more jaw!" "We won't have no more!" "T

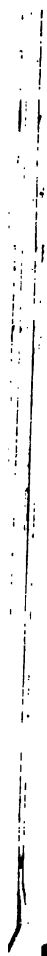
farmer's reight!" "Warfield for ever, t' real owd English gentleman!"

In vain the Mayor entreated them to give every man a fair hearing, in vain the farmer got up and spoke—it was all dumb show—and dumb show it continued. It was proposed and seconded that—"In the opinion of this Meeting Mr. Warfield is a fit and proper person to represent the Riding in Parliament;"—and supposed to be carried all but unanimously; votes of thanks were also proposed and seconded, and also supposed to be carried unanimously; and then the triumphant Committee descended from the platform and went to their room in the Inn; and Mr. Warfield snatched a minute to take Farmer Brown to see Isabel; and the Mayor went to speak to the chief constable; and the Meeting was no longer a meeting, but groups of noisy, eager men; and excited, mischievous boys; parading in all the streets, and congregating at corners, and crying with all their power of lungs the three cries into which their ideas had resolved themselves. "Warfield for ever!" "Hurrah for t' real owd English gentleman!" "Every man to his trade!"—"Warfield

for t' country and Bunton for cotton!"—till it really became matter of surprise that they had any lungs left !

And the unhappy Buntonites, scattered, depressed and overwhelmed, slunk into corners and out-of-the-way places, and looked timidly round before venturing on an occasional, faint, wavering, "Bunton for ever!"—which meant to be a shout, but altogether failed to realize its intention.

END OF VOL. I.



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